The Rif War 1921–26

Morocco's Berber Uprising

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ILLUSTRATED BY MARK STACEY

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CONTENTS

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND 4

SPANISH FORCES, 1909–21 6
Peninsular forces ▪ The *Regulares* ▪ The *Tercio*

OPERATIONS, 1909–21 13
The East, 1909–12 ▪ Forces ▪ Operations: The Gurugu, 1909 ▪ The river Kert, 1911–12
The West, 1911–21

ANNUAL, 1921 18
Silvestre's advance ▪ Collapse ▪ The cost

AFTERMATH, 1921–24 25
Tizzi Azza and Tifarauín ▪ Armoured units ▪ 1923–24: Primo de Rivera's retreat in the west
Spanish air power

ABD EL KRIM'S ZENITH, 1924–25 32
Political status ▪ Rifian forces ▪ Weapons

ABD EL KRIM'S GAMBLE, APRIL 1925 38
French precautions ▪ *La Coloniale* and *l'Armée d'Afrique* ▪ Shock attacks, April–May 1925
French air power ▪ Central and western fronts, May–July 1925 ▪ Eastern front, June–July 1925

ENTER PÉTAIN, JULY–AUGUST 1925 48
Reinforcement and 're-articulation'

COORDINATED OPERATIONS, SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 1925 50
Planning ▪ Kudia Tahar ▪ The Alhucemas landings ▪ French counter-offensive

THE FINAL OFFENSIVE, MAY 1926 56
Planning and forces ▪ Operations ▪ The end

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 63

INDEX 64

THE RIF WAR 1921–26

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The term 'Rif War' is sometimes used loosely, of different periods of fighting in northern Morocco. In this text we summarize the events of 1909–21 as the background to a fuller account of the campaigns of 1921–26. The latter began with Abd el Krim's near annihilation of a Spanish army retreating from Annual to Melilla in July and August 1921 – the greatest-ever defeat of a white colonial army by tribal enemies – which put the Berber leader's uprising on the front pages of newspapers the world over.

* * *

In 1900 Spain was a backward country, governed (under King Alfonso XIII, r. 1886–1931) by an autocratic alliance of the land-owning nobility and the Catholic Church, which was opposed by nascent socialist, republican and anarchist movements. A humiliating defeat by the USA in 1898 had cost Spain its colonies of Cuba and the Philippines. Virtually its only remaining overseas territories were two small coastal enclaves in northern Morocco: Ceuta, on the south coast of the Straits of Gibraltar, and Melilla, on a promontory about 150 miles further east. (These had been held since the 17th and 15th centuries respectively, and are held to this day by agreement with Morocco.)

Spain had expanded these footholds in 1857–60 and 1893, but had hardly exploited either of them. However, early in the 20th century an *'africanista'* pressure group identified northern Morocco, with its potentially valuable mineral resources, as an arena for both colonial exploitation and the redemption of military pride. At that time the almost bankrupt government (*Makhzen/ Maghzan*) of the Sharifian sultans of Morocco had only uncertain control over regional leaders, while Madrid, Paris, Berlin and London all juggled their diplomatic and financial dealings with the Makhzen and regional rulers for best advantage. At the same time as Spain's revival of interest, Germany was also making ambitious trade penetrations, while, from its neighbouring colony of Algeria, France was exerting military pressure on the ill-defined SE Moroccan border. Grudgingly, Spain agreed to align its own and French interests by the Act of

A Berber warrior shows off his horsemanship; judging from the fine quality of his mount, he is a *caid* chieftain, whose authority rests upon traditional family loyalties. His heavy, hooded *chilaba* robe (Fr., *djellaba)*, worn over a white turban and *gandoura,* is typical of highland Berbers. Apart from such leaders, their bodyguards and mounted couriers, virtually all the rebels were light infantry. There was no cavalry tradition in the mountainous Rif itself, although there was among the Metalsa tribe around and SW of the upper Kert river, and among Arabs on the south-eastern front such as the Beni Bou Yahi. (Courtesy Cody Images)

Algeciras in 1906, and in 1911 France bought off German ambitions in Morocco by ceding West African territories to Berlin.

With the Treaty of Fes on 30 March 1912 the Sultanate finally conceded a full French Protectorate over Morocco, and that November France and Spain concluded an illogical but pragmatic agreement. Henceforth each would occupy, as 'protecting powers' for France's puppet sultan, separate zones of Morocco. The Spanish got the northern littoral, roughly 300 miles long and of varying depth south of the Mediterranean coast. From about 65 miles where it met the Atlantic coast in the west, it averaged 50–30 miles deep as it meandered eastwards, finally curving up to the Mediterranean at the mouth of the river Muluya/ Moulouya, the northern end of the frontier with Algeria. South of this interzonal border France's commissioner resident-general in Fes, the renowned colonial soldier Gen Hubert Lyautey, treated Sultan Mulay bin Yusef with ostensible respect, but was in practice the political and military governor of the much larger French zone stretching down to the Sahara.

Although under a single Spanish military high commissioner, the two c*omandancias* of Ceuta and Melilla were both administratively and physically separate, their only practical link being by sea. Between them lay an extensive uncolonized area centred on the rugged Rif ('Edge') mountains. This was inhabited by many tribes of Berber (Imazhigen/ sing. Amazigh) highlanders, who had earned over centuries a reputation for being almost ungovernable. Most Rifians were subsistence farmers living in scattered, loopholed family homesteads and pursuing a culture of blood feuds. Their character has been

OPPOSITE
1921 studio portrait of a Spanish infantry corporal of *Regimiento de Línea No 54 Isabel la Católica* (compare with Plate A1). He wears the M1917 *chambergo* sun-hat, M1914 '*avellano*' ('hazelnut') khaki uniform, brown leather belt and Y-straps with brass fittings, and strap-on rope-soled canvas espadrilles. (*'Alpargatas'* is the Spanish term for both these open-top 'slippers' and the laced white canvas field shoes.) On both forearms note the *cabo's* three diagonal red rank stripes, and on the collar and belt-buckle plate large regimental numerals. His rifle is the bolt-action 7mm M1893 Spanish Mauser with a five-round magazine. (Museo Arqueologíco Municipal Cayetano de Mergelino, Yecla; donor Amparo Muñoz Forte)

OPPOSITE
Map 1: Northern Morocco, *c.* 1909–21. (Map by John Richardson, © Martin Windrow)

compared to that of the equally formidable Pathans of the Indian/ Pakistani North-West Frontier.

South of the mountains, the regions from west to east were the Yebala/ Djibala (a name also used collectively of the local tribes); the Gomara/ Ghomara; and the Guelaya/ Gareb. The western hinterland is partly hilly, wooded, but fertile terrain, resembling parts of southern Europe, but the east is more arid. The Sultanate historically (and now the new colonizers) benefited from the fragmented nature of local resistance. The tribes were disunited and competitive, and thus vulnerable to being (temporarily) pacified one-by-one by alternating warfare and negotiation.

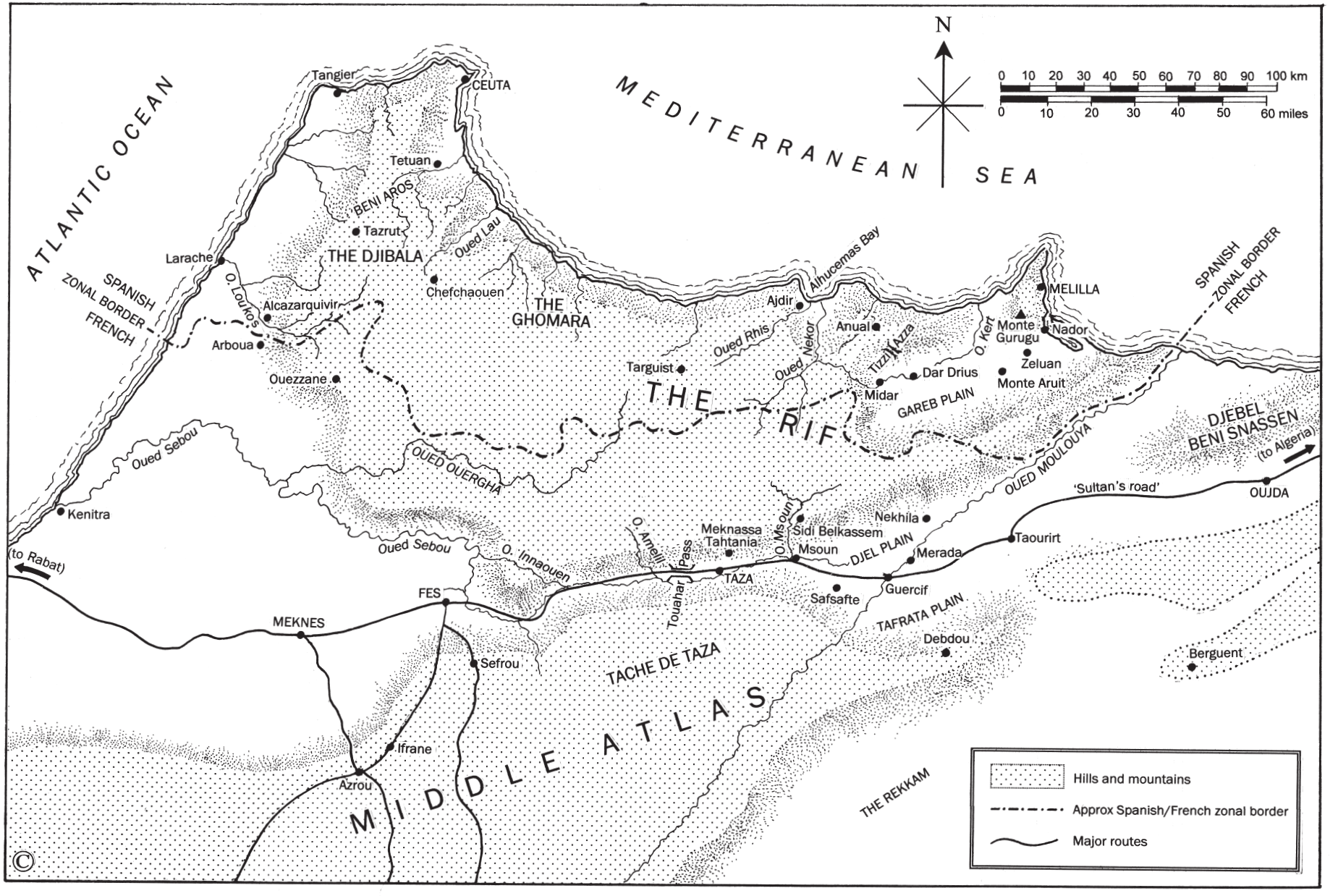
Nevertheless, pacifying northern Morocco in the early 20th century would take Spain (briefly allied with France) 18 years of fighting notable for its savagery (for example, both Rifians and Spanish paraded severed heads as trophies; the Rifians killed thousands of prisoners out of hand; and the Spanish employed poison gas against defenceless villages). Final success cost both countries immense expenditure, and the deaths of perhaps as many as 50,000 Spanish troops and some 8,600 French.

SPANISH FORCES, 1909–21

Peninsular forces

In 1909 the conscript 'Peninsular' army (i.e. raised on the Spanish mainland and islands) had 70 numbered and named regiments (sing., *regimiento*) of *Infanteria de Linea*, each commanded by a *coronel* and theoretically with about 3,000 men in a staff, band and three battalions. In practice, many had only two and some only a single battalion (*batallón,* commanded by a *teniente-coronel*) actually under arms, while the rest were partly embodied reservists. Initially whole regiments were sent to Morocco at need; later only the 1st Bns were deployed, alongside other assembled expeditionary

Ten light cavalry sergeants and a warrant officer (*subofficial,* centre rear), presumably posing at some date before summer 1921. Seven of them wear the fleece-trimmed, black-frogged *pelissa* in varying shades of blue (see Plate A2), and the others the light blue M1909 tunic. All the *sargentos* wear light blue barracks caps with white top piping and a narrow white central stripe, and display three cavalry-silver stripes on their forearms; the *subofficial* has two vertical silver bars on his cuffs. A later hand has inked black crosses above eight of their heads to mark those who would die in action – a stark reminder of the high casualty rate among junior leaders. (Courtesy of Cody Images)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0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 km
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ATLANTIC OCEAN
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Tangier
CEUTA
Tetuan
BENI AROS
Tazrut
THE DJIBALA
Oued Lau
Larache
O. Loukos
Chefchaouen
SPANISH ZONAL BORDER
FRENCH
Alcazarquivir
Arboua
Ouezzane
THE GHOMARA
Ajdir
Alhucemas Bay
MELILLA
Anual
Monte Gurugu
Nador
O. Kert
Oued Rhis
Oued Nekor
Tizzi Azza
Targuist
Dar Drius
Zeluan
Monte Aruit
Midar
GAREB PLAIN
THE RIF
DJEBEL BENI SNASSEN
(to Algeria)
OUJDA
'Sultan's road'
OUED MOULOUYA
Oued Sebou
OUED OUERGHA
Kenitra
(to Rabat)
Nekhila
Sidi Belkassem
Msoun
O. Msoun
O. Amell
Pass
Touahar
Meknassa Tahtania
Oued Sebou
O. Innaouen
DJEL PLAIN
Merada
Taourirt
TAZA
Guercif
Safsafte
FES
MEKNES
TAFRATA PLAIN
Debdou
Berguent
Sefrou
TACHE DE TAZA
Ifrane
Azrou
MIDDLE ATLAS
THE REKKAM
Hills and mountains
Approx Spanish/French zonal border
Major routes
©

1922: Spanish replacements embarked for Morocco at the Basque port of Pasaia, wearing the M1914 khaki uniform with the infantry barracks cap. This had a dark blue top half with red top piping, above double red stripes on the lower half. For artillery the band was halved dark blue over red (see Plate C1); engineers wore black caps with a central red stripe; and each cavalry branch had its own combination.

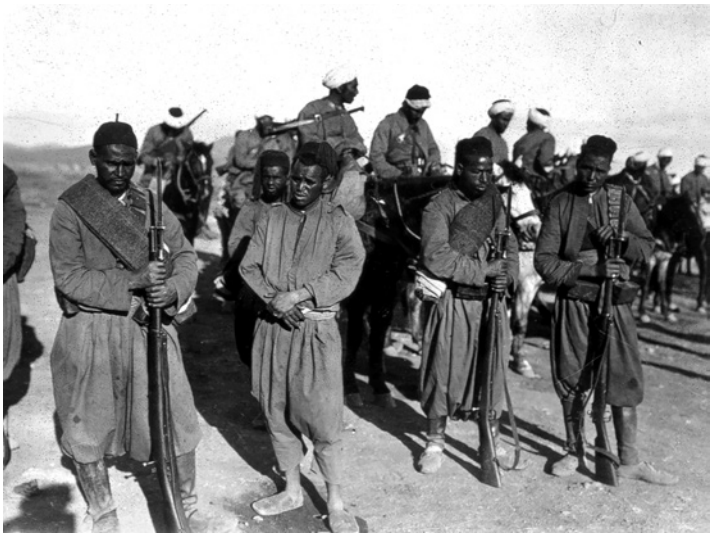
After the heavy losses on the retreat from Annual the army began sending unarmed replacements out in batches of 20–25, hoping on their arrival to be given the rifles of men who were being repatriated. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

battalions. By 1914 a 4-gun Hotchkiss machine-gun company had been added to each battalion's four rifle companies (sing. *compañía*), plus two platoons (sing. *sección*) of specialists. A rifle company (under a *capitán*) had a warrant officer (*subofficial*), a corporal flag-bearer, 2 medical orderlies, 2 combat engineers (*gastadores*), 2 buglers and a drummer, and 3 platoons (or 2, if company strength fell below 72 men). The platoon had a lieutenant

A series of photos of mobilized reserves taken in Spanish ports in 1922–24 show haphazard mixtures of uniform items illustrating the chaotic results of shortages and poor logistics, and (while probably an extreme case) this 1924 scene of artillerymen after their arrival confirms this. Dark blue M1909 tunics are worn with khaki *granaderos* and espadrilles. The single forearm star (right) of an *alferez/* ensign is displayed on a grey September 1909 'Russian greatcoat' *(capote ruso)* with a blue-faced collar; this coat was ordered replaced in 1911 with an archaic-looking blue pattern. All wear the 'pillbox' barracks cap, unsuitable for field use in Morocco due to its lack of an eye-shading peak or neck protection. (Fondo Car Kutxa Fototeca; public domain)

(*alferez* or *teniente*), 2 sergeants, 4 corporals and officially 32 rankers, divided into four 8-man squads (sing. *escuadra*).

In 1909 there were also some 21 named (not yet numbered) conscript light-infantry battalions of *Cazadores* ('hunters'), enjoying a higher reputation than the Line; 6-unit Cazadores brigades were used as spearhead formations in Morocco until they were largely superseded in that role by the later-formed *Regulares* and *Tercio* (see below). Cazadores battalions had 6 rifle companies plus later an MG company.



The first native troops raised in Spanish Morocco from 1908 were the *Policia Indigena*; by 1913 both they (foreground), and the *Regulares* (background) raised from 1912, were wearing the same *'garbanzo'* ('chickpea') -coloured uniforms with very loose-cut knee-length trousers (see Plate B2). In this Rif War photo at least two of the policemen are wearing knee-high, two-buckle brown leather gaiters as originally issued to infantry *Regulares*.

Moroccans show a wide range of ethnic characteristics and complexions, from pale Berber to dark African and anything between. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

The cavalry rotated to Morocco usually consisted of *Cazadores de Caballeria* (light horse), of which there were 17 regiments in 1919, plus single independent squadrons (*escuadronas sueltos*) at Melilla, Ceuta and later Larache. Each regiment had three sabre squadrons plus, by 1919, an MG squadron (later a 'mixed' squadron, with the addition of M1922 Hotchkiss light machine guns), plus depot and reserve squadrons. Squadron strength varied between 100 and 132, in four platoons each comprising a lieutenant, a sergeant, 3 corporals, a farrier a trumpeter and at least 19 troopers.

Field and mountain artillery batteries were also rotated, often in mixed regiments. The most common of their varied equipment were 7cm and 7.5cm/ 75mm Krupp, Schneider and St Chamond field pieces and 65mm mountain guns.

By World War I the basic garrisons in the Moroccan Comandancias were as follows:

Ceuta (from 1913, Ceuta & Tetuán):
Inf Bde: Line Inf Regts Nos 60 Ceuta & 69 Serrallo (each 3x bns); *Cazadores Bde:* (4–6x bns); 2x Regulares groups (each 2x inf bns + cav bn); Cazadores de Caballeria Regt No 28 Vitoria; mixed or mountain Artillery regt; Engineer regiment.

Larache (from 1912–13):
Marine Inf Regt (3x bns): 2x Cazadores bns; Regulares group; Caz de Cab Regt No 29 Taxdirt; Arty regt; Eng battalion.

Melilla:
*1*st *Inf Bde*: Line Inf Regts Nos 59 Melilla & 68 Africa; *2nd Inf Bde:* Line Inf Regts Nos 42 Ceriñola & 11 San Fernando (all 3x bns); *Cazadores Bd*e (4–6x bns); Regulares group; Caz de Cab Regt No 14 Alcántara; Arty regt; Eng regiment.

It is widely recognized by Spanish historians that the all-conscript Peninsular army was badly paid and treated, poorly trained and supplied, often incompetently led, and endemically corrupt; consequently, it was weak in skills, logistics and morale. (A few examples from rankers' memoirs will suffice here. In Morocco, the misappropriation of money, supplies and equipment was so common that even junior officers were known to sell weapons and ammunition in local markets simply in order to buy fresh food. Many officers

were routinely absent from their units, spending more time in debauchery than on duty; and many had never even bothered to learn map-reading.)

The *Regulares*

The Spanish first attracted allied irregulars from tribes hostile to their current opponents, and between 1908 and 1912 they formed a *Polícia Indigena*, at first in companies (sing*: mia)* and then in small battalions (sing: *tabor*).

From 30 June 1911 the first tabor of regular native troops (*Fuerzas Regulares Indigenas*) was formed by LtCol Dámaso Berenguer Fusté in Melilla, and during 1912 a second and a third in Melilla and Ceuta. Each unit initially had a 20-strong Peninsular cadre, 300 native infantry and 127 native cavalry, in four companies and one squadron. From January 1912 the rifle companies in a tabor

A

SPANISH TROOPS, 1921

(1) *Cabo, Regimiento de Infanteria de Linea No 42 Ceriñola*
Introduced from 1917, by 1921 this chambergo sun-hat (also nicknamed the 'Americano') was widespread throughout the army in Morocco. Photos show variations in details of manufacture and in the way it was worn, with brims turned up or down at front, back or side.

The first khaki uniforms appeared in Morocco from 1908, introduced by an order of May 1906, and one of June 1914 extended the use of khaki to all branches and theatres. This corporal's M1914 tunic *(guerrera)* has seven brass – or brown composition – front buttons; plain shoulder straps; patch breast pockets; and a squared standing collar bearing brass regimental numbers (we choose the '42' of Ceriñola simply because of its strong presence at Annual). Line *soldados de primera* were distinguished by a narrow point-upward chevron in branch-colour red (green for Cazadores) extending from the shoulder seam to the elbow on the left sleeve only. Corporals and sergeants wore, respectively, triple red and triple gold diagonal stripes on both forearms, and warrant officers *(brigadas* and *subofficiales)* one and two vertical gold bars on the cuff. The distinctive M1914 *granadero* trousers were fastened down the outside calf with small buttons, and incorporated 'spats'. Later photos also show trousers shortened to the knee and worn with puttees or canvas gaiters. On campaign, these rope-soled canvas strap-on espadrilles were commonly worn instead of leather boots.

The brown belt equipment replaced a black set from about 1911; it supports three cartridge 'boxes', and the frogged bayonet (either the 1892/ 93 11-in blade, or M1913 17-in) for the 7mm M1893 Spanish-made bolt-action Mauser rifle. Infantrymen wore an off-white or khaki haversack and a cloth-covered water bottle slung to the hips, and just visible is a 'semi-flattened' tin mug strapped in front of his brass belt plate. For marching order an off-white canvas knapsack with H-straps was added, and, over all, a brown blanket in a 'horseshoe roll'. (After photos, & Bueno, *La Infanteria de Linea.*)

(2) *General de Brigada* Manuel Fernández Silvestre, GOC Melilla Command
Born in Cuba, Silvestre graduated as a 22-year-old cavalry subaltern in 1893, and in 1895 was posted to Cuba in an expeditionary unit to fight insurgents. Spirited charges brought him renown, and multiple wounds; he was a major by January 1898, but seems to have played no part in the Spanish-American War. In Morocco (1904–12) he rose to full colonel and command at Larache, and in June 1913 he was promoted to brigadier-general. Disputes with colleagues led to his recall to Spain, as a royal ADC, in July 1915. He returned to Morocco as GOC Ceuta in July 1919, becoming GOC Melilla in February 1920.

The officers' khaki *gorra de plato* ('*teresiano*') service-dress cap was introduced for 'undress' duties in October 1908, and by 1921 was often worn on campaign by senior officers. With gold piping and a gold lace chinstrap, it bore a crown badge (often hidden under the 'overhang' of the stiffened top) above, for general officers, a crossed baton-and-sword badge on the band with one to four large 4-point stars. In the cold desert night many light cavalrymen chose to wear as an overjacket their M1909 sky-blue *pelissa,* lined with black astrakhan and trimmed and frogged with black silk lace, cords and toggles. Note the protruding ends of double gold aiguillettes worn on his tunic. Khaki breeches and mahogany-brown boots complete the uniform. Silvestre's left arm was affected by old wounds. (Composite, after photos in Garcia de Gabiola, Vol 1.)

(3) *Cazador, Regimiento de Cazadores de Caballeria No 14 Alcántara*
This was reportedly the regiment that fought the most effectively while covering the retreat from Annual, but, according to Garcia de Gabiola, from a strength of 691 only about 67 would survive.

As well as the sun-hat, this *gorra de cuartel* barracks cap was worn in the field by all ranks and branches – by light horse units, in sky blue. By regulation Regt No 14 rankers' caps should have had a central band-stripe in white, but Bueno mentions variations for six units granted special distinctions; by comparison with its twin regiment, No 30 Calatrava, we *guess* that Alcántara might have displayed double green bottom stripes. Shades of the M1914 khaki uniform in photos vary due to dispersed manufacture, and fading from wear and washing. His unit's special badge (four conjoined *fleur-de-lys* forming a cross) is displayed as green cloth cut-outs on the tunic collar. Black one-strap leather leggings seem to have been non-regulation but quite widespread at this date. The sabre, normally slung from the left of the saddle, is worn here from the belt. This M1895 sabre, officially superseded by the M1907 in 1918, remained in wide use throughout the Rif War – as did the 'snub-nose' M1895 version of the German M1888 cavalry carbine, although officially replaced from November 1916. (After Bueno, *Los Cazadores de Caballeria*, and photos.)

1
42
42
2
3

The magazine *Grafico Mundo* published portraits of many casualties, including this photo of *Alferez* Jaime Gil Mejuto of *Regulares Grupo No 4 de Larache,* who was wounded twice during February 1921. For details of the red-crowned cap and khaki M1920 uniform, see commentaries to Plates B3 and C2 respectively. Note the crossed-rifles-and-crescent collar badges of *Regulares* infantry worn with the upper crown tilted outwards. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

were increased to six and the cavalry squadrons to three. At first the officers, sergeants and some specialist rankers were all Spanish, but a few Moroccans were gradually promoted to sergeant and second lieutenant. The status of professional soldiers was attractive to the local warrior culture, and the recruits offered valuable fieldcraft and local knowledge. The Regulares soon earned a good reputation, which in turn attracted the more energetic and professional minority of Spanish officers.

From 1914 four regiment-equivalent *Grupos de Regulares* were organized, each under a lieutenant-colonel, with two (three, from April 1915) three-company infantry tabors and a now separate three-squadron cavalry tabor. These were designated 1st Group of Melilla (became 1st of Tetuán in December 1916), 2nd Group of Melilla, 3rd of Ceuta, and 4th of Larache (which would receive a fourth tabor in 1921, due to its large operational area). In 1919 each Group received an additional all-Spanish four-gun MG company. In 1921 each infantry tabor had three rifle companies and an MG company, and from 1922 each cavalry tabor had three sabre squadrons and a 6-gun mixed MG/LMG squadron.

An infantry tabor's Spanish cadres in the staff and the rifle companies then comprised a major commanding, 3 captains, 9 subalterns (including both *alferez* and *teniente* ranks), 3 warrant officers, 9 sergeants, 20 corporals, 2 buglers, 5 privates 1st class and 67 2nd class. The Moroccan establishment was 3 subalterns, 9 sergeants, 19 corporals, 10 buglers, 19 privates 1st class and 284 2nd class. The Spanish MG company had a captain, 2 subalterns, 1 warrant officer, 4 sergeants, 4 corporals, a bugler, 2 privates 1st Class and 42 2nd class, with 19 pack-mules. A Regulares infantry tabor thus officially comprised 520 all ranks, of whom 175 were Spanish.

Finally among native units, Peninsular officers and NCOs served as instructors in *Mehalas Jalifianas* – two-battalion regiments in the army of the Moroccan Sultanate and Makhzen. In 1915 there were six infantry and two cavalry Mehalas.

The *Tercio*

From 1918, the failures of the conscript army led to pressure from highly motivated officers of the Regulares – led by LtCol José Millán Astray Terreros – for the formation of professional, long-service European infantry units to head up offensive operations. In September 1920 Millán Astray secured authorization to form the first three battalions of the *Tercio de Extranjeros* ('Tercio' in reference to the infantry regiments of Spain's 16th/ 17th-century supremacy). This corps was open to both Spanish and foreign volunteers – although, unlike in France's *Légion Étrangère*, the latter (mostly Portuguese or Latin Americans) actually made up only a minority of recruits.

The Tercio (which its soldiers in fact always called *'la Legión')* was organized in 600-man *Banderas* ('flags', i.e. battalions). Each Bandera had an HQ company,

2 rifle companies (3, from October 1921), and a 6-gun MG company. The first three battalions were established by the end of 1920 at Dar Riffien near Ceuta, the 1st being commanded by Millán Astray's 2ic (and the future dictator of Spain) Maj Francisco Franco Bahamonde. Recruits were offered an enlistment bounty and about three times the pay of conscripts; they were given serious local training, and were inculcated with an aggressive *esprit de corps* (Millán Astray hailed them as 'the betrothed of death'). During November 1920 all three battalions were sent south into the Yebala to campaign against the warlord Mulay Ahmad el Raisuli.

OPERATIONS, 1909–21

THE EAST, 1909–1912

Forces

In June 1909 Gen José Marina's Melilla Command comprised the reinforced 5,500-strong Melilla Brigade: Line Inf Regts Nos 68 Africa & 59 Melilla (each 3x bns), plus a Disciplinary Bn (ex-convicts); Caz de Cab Sqn Melilla; 2 artillery units; and an engineer company.

During the June–November 1909 campaign (see below), Marina would receive reinforcements multiplying that strength by nearly ten times, as follows:

(By 31 July 1909) 3rd Mixed Bde, Barcelona:
Cazadores Bns Alfonso XII, Barcelona, Estella, Reus, Alba de Tormes, Mérida
2x MG platoons; sqn, Caz de Cab Regt No 26 Treviño; 3x arty batteries.

1st Mixed Bde, Madrid:
Caz Bns Madrid, Barbastro, Figueras, Arapiles, Las Navas, Llerena
2x MG ptns; sqn, Caz de Cab Regt No 12 Lusitania; 3x arty batteries.

2nd Mixed Bde, Campo de Gibraltar:
Caz Bns Cataluña, Tarifa, Ciudad Rodrigo, Segorbe, Chiclana, Talavera
MG group; sqn, Caz de Cab Regt No 24 Alfonso XIII; arty group (bn).

Total strength then c.23,000 men, and 1st & 2nd Mixed Bdes formed Cazadores Div.

(By 12 August) 1st Reinforced Div:
1st Bde: Line Inf Regts Nos 1 Inmemorial del Rey & 38 León (each 3x bns); arty group.
2nd Bde: Line Inf Regts Nos 6 Saboya & 50 Wad Ras (each 3x bns); MG group.
2x sqns, Caz de Cab Regt No 27 Maria Cristina; 3x arty batteries.
3x sqns, Regt Húsares de la Princesa.

In Spain, the call-up of reservists for Morocco caused serious civil unrest in several cities. In Barcelona, 'Tragic Week' (26 July–2 August) saw bloody riots led by Catalan 'revolutionary councils', at a cost of up to 150 killed, 440 wounded and 1,700 arrested.

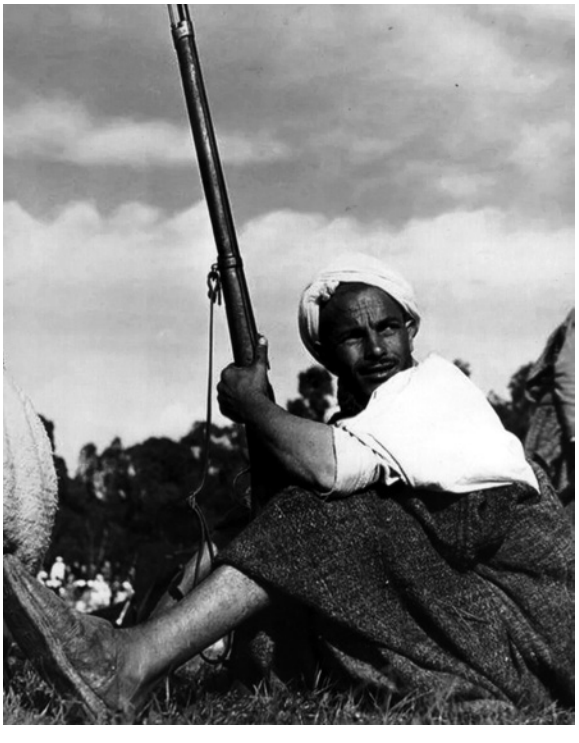
1924 studio portrait of Maj José Villalba Rubio, commanding the 2nd *Bandera* of the *Tercio* (contrast with Plate H1), and evidently one of the officers who chose to display a small royal crown badge above the rank star on his *'isabelino'* cap. He has the badge of *'la Legión'* on his gold-piped shoulder straps; three gold-lace officers' wound chevrons on his left sleeve; and on his forearm what may possibly be the badge of the Collective Military Medal, awarded to units. An infantry veteran of the 1909 campaign, Villalba would serve under Col Franco in the Alhucemas (Al Hoceima) landings of September 1925. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

(By 14 September) 2nd Organic Div:
1st Bde: Line Inf Regts Nos 3 Principe & 36 Burgos (each 3x bns)
2nd Bde: Line Inf Regts Nos 27 Cuenca & 53 Guipúzcoa (each 3x bns)
2–3 sqns, Caz de Cab Regt No 24 Alfonso XIII.
Total strength then c.44,000 men.
(From early October) part 3rd Organic Div:
1st Bde: Line Inf Regts Nos 42 Ceriñola & 11 San Fernando (each 3x bns), plus Disciplinary Bn
1st Cav Bde: Regt Lanceros de la Reina, Regt Húsares de Pavía.

Operations: The Gurugu, 1909

In June 1909, warriors led by Mohammed Amezian ('El Mizzián') of the Beni Bu Ifrur tribe attacked workers building mining infrastructure in the rugged Gurugu massif, which filled much of the promontory SW of Melilla (see Map 1). When punitive raids on villages failed to discourage the rebels, piecemeal advances into the mountains were attempted. Reconnaissance was inadequate, and in this broken terrain the rebels could easily dominate the high ground and launch costly ambushes. Spanish troops were trained only in European linear tactics, and most commanders proved incompetent in this asymmetric warfare, while the rebels manoeuvred across country with ease. Early Spanish operations achieved only the establishment of vulnerable outposts; meanwhile the opposition increased and spread, as tribes encouraged by local successes coordinated their efforts. Although the Spanish achieved some successes their casualties were often in the hundreds, leading to the successive shipping-in of major Spanish reinforcements (see above). The highly unpopular mobilization of unprepared reservists finally brought down the Madrid government on 21 October.

Consequently, the greatly reinforced Gen Marina did not launch his final converging offensive until 26–27 November, with 17,800 men from the Cazadores Div, the 1st, 2nd & 3rd Divs and the Melilla Brigade. The campaign officially ended with the submission of about 5,000 warriors from seven main tribes (though not El Mizzián himself). Total Spanish casualties for the campaign were reported as 7,424: of these, 259 were killed in action, 1,523 wounded, 200 died of disease, and 5,142 sick survived.



In the heat of the day this resting warrior has slipped down his heavy *chilaba*, revealing the shorter-sleeved white *gandoura* worn beneath it; note also his simple rolled turban, and sandals. In the early years of Berber resistance many tribesmen were armed with this single-shot 11mm French M1874 Gras rifle, among other obsolescent French, Belgian, Spanish and British types. Of simple, sturdy construction, and accurate at any realistic battle range, this antique was still being used by Greece in 1941, and was even seen in the Yemen in the early 2000s. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

The river Kert, 1911–12

The practical front line was now the river Kert SW of the Melilla promontory, where Gen José García Aldave commanded. By October 1911 he had about 41,500 troops, in a Melilla Div and a division-equivalent of Expeditionary Forces. These totalled some 30 battalions of infantry, about 800 Native Police and Regulares, 4 MG groups, 10 squadrons and 17 batteries.

Initially concentrating on the as-yet undelineated interzonal frontier with the French, García Aldave soon faced raiding from across the Kert by strong war-parties from the central Rif stirred up by El Mizzián. See-saw fighting continued on both banks between May and October, and in November the

Spanish stretcher-bearers on campaign in the Melilla *Comandancia* in 1909; note the characteristic 'semi-flattened' tin mug strapped over the central soldier's belt buckle.

This stiff black *'ros'* shako, with a white or light khaki cover and sun-flap (see right), was worn in Morocco from about 1909 until 1914. It was then replaced with both the British M1898 Wolesley sun-helmet with a khaki cover, and the French M1886 equivalent (both called a *'salacot tropical'* in Spanish). Khaki uniforms were ordered for use in Morocco in May 1906 and introduced from 1908, initially being worn alongside this previous white-and-blue ticking *'rayadillo'.* Compliance with all such orders took time, despite the priority given to equipping the troops in Morocco. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

Spanish built a defensive line of posts along the middle Kert. After abortive truce talks, in late December El Mizzián led large mixed tribal forces across the Kert on a wide front, penetrating the east bank deeply with dispersed groups which proved hard to locate, and even harder to fix.

García Aldave reorganized his reinforced forces into an Organic Div and a Provisional Div of Line troops, and a Reserve of Cazadores and Regulares. El Mizzián continued to outmanoeuvre the Spanish until 15 May 1912, when some 14,250 troops in six converging columns pinned his force down at Ulad Gannen, where he was killed in battle. The tribes began to disperse during the summer, and – at the cost of some 500 Spanish dead and 1,900 other casualties – the Kert frontier would then remain quiet for some years.

THE WEST, 1911–1921

In the larger territory south of Ceuta and into the Yebala, the strongest warlord was Mulay Ahmad el Raisuli (spellings differ). The forename Mulay/Moulay identifies Sharifian families claiming descent from the Prophet's line, and in 1908 the sultan's government had been obliged to recognize Raisuli as the regional governor *(pasha)* of the Yebala. This brave, ruthless robber-baron was also a master of manipulative diplomacy. Over some 15 years he exploited his status to play the Sultanate and the Spanish off against one another, alternately encouraging rebellion and pretending loyalty to the Makhzen. Given these political complications, Spanish operations on the Ceuta, Tetuán and Larache fronts would be intermittent and complex.

From March 1911 the GOC Ceuta, Gen Felipe Alfau, began a diplomatically agreed penetration southwards towards Tetuán. That June, marines landed at

Larache on the Atlantic coast and marched inland along the Lucus/ Loukos river to occupy Alcazarquivir. From there, Col Manuel Fernándes Silvestre's force moved east and north in August to secure communications with Ceuta. In February 1913 Gen Alfau's troops occupied Tetuán (which would become the regional capital) without a fight, and in June–August Silvestre's reinforced command fought around Larache, Alcazarquivir, and also further north behind the Atlantic coast. There were now some 22,000 Spanish troops around Ceuta and Tetuán, while the now-Gen Silvestre had another 14,000-odd, holding territory west of a line very roughly from Tangier down to Alcazarquivir. In August 1913 command at Ceuta passed to Gen Marina, who mounted punitive columns but remained essentially on the defensive.

B

POLICIA INDIGENA & REGULARES, 1921–25

(See errata, imprint page)

(1) *Ascari, Policia Indigena*; Tifaraouín, August 1923
On his red *chéchia* cap this native policeman displays a blue tassel, and silver badges of a 5-point star over a crescent. The uniform beneath his *chilaba* robe is that also worn by the Regulares (see B2), of a warm sand-khaki shade called *garbanzo* ('chickpea'), worn with the popular rope-soled white canvas *alpargatos* shoes. The *chilaba* of highland tribesmen was heavily woven from wool sometimes mixed with goathair, of voluminous cut and with a large hood. This blue example with minimal paler blue trimming has been illustrated for Native Police. Among native troops, the combination of a waist belt with 'box' pouches and a bandolier of smaller clip pouches appeared in about 1912, and was common after 1918. The exact types and arrangement of pouches varied; sometimes five clip pouches also replaced those on the belt. A plain example of a general-purpose *skala* satchel is slung to his hip. His weapons are a family heirloom *koummya jambiya* dagger, and a Spanish M1893 rifle; unlike the British pre-1914, the Spanish did not limit native troops to obsolescent firearms.

(2) *Soldado, Grupo de Regulares No 3 de Ceuta*; Melilla, autumn 1921
The *chéchia's* black tassel and the coloured *faja* sash show that this *soldado moro* is about to take part in some mundane daily ceremony, such as mounting guard. For his study in 1989, José Maria Bueno was unable to locate the dress regulations for native troops issued in April 1914, so his research relied largely on photos and memoirs. Alternative headgear was the taller, stiffer *tarbouche*. The infantry only wore a *rexa* turban in combination with the cap for some ceremonial honour-guards, but it was often worn in the cavalry *tabors*. The coloured waist sash was not worn in combat. From 1914 its colour identified the *grupo*: according to Bueno, No 1 de Tetuán = royal blue; No 2 de Mellila = bright red; No 3 de Ceuta = green; No 4 de Larache = dark blue, and No 5 de Alhucemas = burgundy-red (later, green). Here we choose the green of Grupo No 3, which was the first to rush units to Melilla after Annual. He still wears the 1914-pattern tunic, without pockets and with a fly front.

The tunic and baggy knee-length trousers were made in this *garbanzo* shade. Pockets and visible front buttons (as already worn by Peninsular NCOs), and even some turn-down collars, would start to appear in 1922–23. The Regulares infantry badge (a brass crown, above a silver crescent set on brass crossed rifles) was worn on the collar, and NCOs' stripes followed Spanish practice. Initially all Regulares had knee-high brown leather leggings and ankle boots, but, except for formal occasions, infantrymen soon adopted puttees and *alpargatas* shoes. Here, the standard belt with three 'box' pouches has an attached bandolier of clip pouches; how the belt pouches were attached to hang below the sash is puzzling, but Bueno illustrates this arrangement more than once. In place of both greatcoat and blanket, Regulares carried a *chilaba* in a 'horseshoe roll'. Its colour was often dark brown or blue, and those of rankers seldom displayed decoration. Some men seem to have had the same haversacks and water bottles as Peninsular infantry, but others local satchels and water-skins. (Composite, after Bueno, *Los Regulares,* and photos.)

(3) Spanish *Capitán, II/ Grupo de Regulares No 2 de Melilla*; Tetuán front, September 1925
Officers of Regulares wore uniforms of the same colour as their men, tailored according to Army regulations – so, from 1920/22, cut in British style (see Plate C2). Their field headgear was usually the *chéchia,* sometimes the *chambergo*. On campaign some also favoured *chilaba* robes, typically displaying the *grupo* colour as edging braid and a *galleta* left chest-tab bearing their rank stars.

Bueno remarks particularly on this captain's non-regulation campaign use of the peaked cap, given a rakish look by the removal of its internal stiffener. For officers of Regulares it had a scarlet crown with gold piping at the crown seam, down all four sides, and around the top edge of the *garbanzo*-coloured band. An order of June 1920 specified a leather chinstrap, but many officers chose to keep bullion lace. Gilt badges showed the crown above crossed rifles with a large superimposed silver crescent (for the cavalry *tabors*, all in silver, with crossed lances). The pale khaki shirt of June 1920 regulations lacked shoulder straps and pockets, but bears here a left-breast *galleta* in Grupo No 2's red, with the three 6-point gold stars of captain's rank. The *garbanzo*-coloured breeches are worn with leather leggings and ankle boots. Field equipment typically included a 9mm semi-automatic pistol (Astra 400, or Campo Giro M1912 or M1913), binoculars, a mapcase, and a sturdy metal-shod walking stick.

Bueno apparently bases this figure on a photo of Capt Miguel Rodrigo Ramirez, who distinguished himself while leading 3rd Co, II Tabor of Grupo No 2 in LtCol Balmes's successful relief of Kudia Tahar on 11–12 September 1925. (After Bueno, *Los Regulares;* Garcia de Gabiola, *The Rif War* Vol 2; & Muñoz Bolaños in *Desperta Ferro Contemporánea* No 10.)

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A staged photo of Spanish infantry 'attacking' near Melilla, *c.* 1909; the contrast in shade between shako-covers and uniforms suggests that the latter are still made of '*rayadillo*'. Close-order linear formations proved costly when unprepared Peninsular troops were deployed against guerrillas in broken terrain. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

During World War I (in which Spain remained neutral) the Spanish sought to reduce unrest over mobilizations by increasing their formation of Regulares, Native Police and Makhzen units. From September 1915 Madrid ordered Gen Marina's successor, Gen Gómez Jordana, to subsidize Raisuli, who then focused on intertribal fighting in the region between Tetuán and the holy southern city of Xauen/ Chefchaouen. At first coordinating his operations with a Spanish offensive, in 1917–18 he roused rebel bands further north to harass the Ceuta-Tetuán route. Raisuli was now juggling simultaneous dealings with the Sultanate, Spain, France and Germany, and double-crossing them all. Although Gen Larrea's Ceuta-Tetuán Comandancia had about 32,000 Spanish and 8,000 Moroccan troops by 1918, the road and new railway between those cities were often cut, and venturesome units – even in battalion strength – often ran into trouble.

Following the 1918 Armistice in Europe the Spanish high commissioner, Gen Dámaso Berenguer, determined to pacify the Yebala once and for all, and began by stripping Raisuli of his Makhzen governorship and declaring him outlaw. In October 1920 Gen Larrea launched a major operation southwards and occupied Xauen (where Spanish troops earned a reputation for cruel indiscipline), thus cutting off Raisuli's base at Tazarut/ Tazrut in the Beni Aros hills from the Gomara country to the south-east. Final converging attacks on Tazarut from 25 June 1921 were spearheaded by Nos 1, 3 & 4 Grupos of Regulares. On 22 July they were within sight of their objective when shocking news from Melilla halted the operation.

Probably in spring 1921 in the Yebala region, a legionary of the *Tercio* helps a wounded NCO to the rear. Both wear the '*isabelino*' cap with red piping and tassel. Note the contrast between the private's new greenish-khaki uniform and the paler shade of that worn by the *sargento*, of which the tunic seems to be a faded M1914 modified with a turn-down collar. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

ANNUAL, 1921

Silvestre's advance

From mid-1919 the Melilla Comandancia, with some 26,000 Spanish and 5,100 Moroccan troops, had been gradually extending outposts SW up the Kert river. The following year command passed to Gen Manuel Fernándes Silvestre; this headstrong cavalryman was a royal favourite, prone to insubordination, who epitomized a military culture that valued 'boldness' over detailed planning and logistics. In May 1920 Silvestre ignored experienced

local advice, and thrust aggressively westwards with a majority of his command. He aimed to divide tribes to the north from those to the south, and his objective for 1921 was Alhucemas (Al Hoceima) Bay in the central Rif. As Silvestre's columns advanced some clans changed sides, some were forced into resentful submission, while others withdrew to seek allies further west. The most important of the latter were the Beni Urriaguel/ Ait Waryaghar tribe. Some 40,000 strong in nine clans, they inhabited the central Rif west of the Nekor river, around Alhucemas Bay and up the Rhis river to the Djebel Hammam and Targuist.

Since spring 1919, two sons of a renowned Beni Urriaguel leader – Mohammed bin Abd el Krim el Khattabi, a respected Islamic judge of stern orthodoxy, then about 40 years old; and his younger brother M'hamed – had been gathering followers in the hills. Both were educated and relatively worldly men: Mohammed had worked for the Spanish as a functionary and journalist in Melilla, while M'hamed had trained as an engineer in Madrid. The elder brother (hereafter simply called Abd el Krim) was a charismatic political visionary, who preached not just resistance to the Spanish but the creation of a unified Rifian state independent of the Sultanate. He gathered followers by the traditional mixture of religious inspiration, the promise of victories and loot, and simple coercion. By summer 1921 he had attracted between 3,000 and 6,000 tribesmen, mainly (clockwise from the Oued Rhis) of the Beni Urriaguel, Temsaman, Ait (or Beni) Tuzin, Metalsa, Gzinnaya, Beni Ammart/ Ait Ammarth, and Bocoya/ Ibuqquyen.

The Abd el Krim el Khattabi brothers (the younger, M'hamed, left, and Mohamed centre), photographed with members of their entourage after their eventual surrender in May 1926. While Mohammed was the charismatic political visionary who created the rebel alliance, his younger brother was the abler military leader; he was the organizer of the Rifian 'regulars', and often commanded in the field, particularly on the western front. All photos of the brothers show them in modest clothing, without any visible trappings of their power and wealth.

Note (right) the *caid* wearing a large white *tagelmust* head-cloth over his hooded white *djubba*, under a *chilaba* striped in at least three colours. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

By June 1921, Silvestre's discontinuous advanced line ran roughly south from Sidi Driss on the coast, via Annual and Midar, down to Zoco el Telata/ Souk el Tleta on the upper Kert (see Map 2, page 37). His strength in the forward zone has been calculated as just over 20,000, of whom up to 5,000 were Moroccans. The historian Javier Garcia de Gabiola gives the following approximate strengths and units then in the main camps and detachments (though some had moved by mid-July):

Annual (*c.*5,100 men): Gen Silvestre's HQ; Line Inf Regts Nos 11 San Fernando (5 inf cos + 2 MG cos), 42 Ceriñola (3 bn HQs, 7 inf cos + MG co) & 68 Africa (4 inf cos); Regulares Grupo No 2 de Melilla (3 bns + 3 sqns); 3 arty batteries. **Detached to Cheif, c.22 miles to SE** (*c.*950 men): Line Inf Regt No 59 Melilla (Bn HQ, 4 inf cos + MG company). **Detached to Ben Tieb gorge, c.6 miles to NE** (*c.*700 men): 3 inf cos, 1 cav squadron.

Dar el Qebdani, rear depot c.12 miles to E (*c.*1,200 men): Line Inf Regt No 59 Melilla (2 bn HQs, 5 inf cos + MG company).

Dar Drius (*c.*1,350 men): Line Inf Regts Nos 58 Alcántara (regt HQ + bn) & 11 San Fernando (2 cos); Caz de Cab Regt No 14 Alcántara (4 sabre sqns + MG squadron).

Zoco el Telata (*c.*850 men): Line Inf Regt No 58 Africa (4 inf cos + MG company).

An officers' group convened by Gen Silvestre (centre, in *'teresiano'* cap and rough-pile woollen coat – contrast with Plate A2) shows the freedom in clothing enjoyed by Spanish officers in the field, particularly in cold weather. The partly seen man in the left foreground has a leather coat; standing beyond, an officer of native troops with a red *tarbouche* wears a pale civilian trench coat; right of him, note the non-regulation beret and dark (civilian?) jacket; and the man in the right foreground has a civilian trilby hat, worn with a woollen cardigan. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

However, roughly the same number of troops (*c.*10,000) were also dispersed in about 38 outposts and some 50 tiny *'blocaos'*. These platoon or even squad 'blockhouses' were rudimentary cabins of timber, sandbags and corrugated iron with a few strings of barbed wire, in which handfuls of neglected soldiers suffered from wretched conditions. Their dispersal achieved no useful purpose, while denying Silvestre any concentrated operational reserve. Moreover, from main camps down to blockhouses, many positions were badly sited for defensibility and (crucially) water access.

On his side, Abd el Krim then had perhaps 3,000 battle-ready warriors, of whom only a minority had modern rifles. However, their innate culture made them expert guerrilla fighters; they were stealthy and highly mobile across country, alert to any opportunity to cut Spanish communications, and never tried to hold any captured objective for longer than was needed to loot it. In the face of stronger enemies they fell back behind leapfrogging rearguards, only to concentrate again elsewhere: 'tough, valiant and resourceful, [they could] march up to 30 miles a day across difficult terrain'.

Collapse

On 1 June the Native Police providing most of a 250-strong post garrison at Abarrán SW of Sidi Driss mutinied in alliance with Temsaman rebels; few of the Spanish escaped, leaving behind four Krupp guns and 200 rifles. The next day Sidi Driss itself suffered 100 casualties while holding off an attack, despite having naval gunfire support.

A 1921 postcard, showing Spanish troops guarding the southbound motor road between Nador and Tauima. The fall of Nador on 3 August condemned troops holding out further south – notably those at Zelouan airfield, and the refugees at Monte Arruit – to surrender, followed by massacre. (Culture Club via Getty Images)

By 15 July at least 1,500 Rifians were approaching Annual, from where Silvestre then planted some 250 men of Line Inf Regt No 11 and a battery at Igueriben, about three miles south-west. On 17 July a relief column to Igueriben was almost wiped out; others in successively increasing strength all failed, and on 21 July only 25 survivors from the outpost reached Annual. That camp was itself poorly sited, being overlooked, and with 'dead ground' masking some approaches close to the wire; the garrison was numerous, but reportedly had only enough ammunition for 40 rounds per man.

Silvestre's previous overconfidence had utterly collapsed, and his orders on 22 July were contradictory. At first he told unit commanders to prepare for a costly retreat via Ben Tieb, but later he countermanded this, ordering them to stand fast. A false report that the Rifians were advancing on Annual in overwhelming strength then caused panic; the chain of command dissolved, and the beginning of a disorderly retreat via Ben Tieb soon became a rout. In this chaos, many irregulars, Native Police and some Regulares changed sides, firing on the Spanish. Staff officers were among those killed, and Gen Silvestre may have shot himself.

Berber warriors sorting through captured Spanish rifles. Sources naturally differ over the exact numbers of various weapons lost by the Spanish after Annual, but there were enough to equip some 20,000 rebels with the same firearms as the Spanish army they faced, with plentiful ammunition (note crates in background).

Reportedly, Spanish troops who surrendered at once and handed over their rifles were more likely to be killed out of hand than the survivors of post garrisons who had fought to the last cartridge, who might occasionally be spared in appreciation of their courage. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

Units retreating under fire broke up into separated parties, without flank or rear guards. Those who survived the last purposeful actions at Ben Tieb gorge (notably, by Cavalry Cazadores Regt No 14 Alcántara, and some Melilla Regulares) simply fled, often discarding equipment. Meanwhile, although Abd el Krim had initially

faced odds of at least 3 to 1 against, increasing numbers of tribesmen now joined the hunt from all sides, blocking the routes of retreat. Outpost garrisons either joined the flight (some actually handing over their weapons in the vain hope of buying safe passage out) or were wiped out, and over the following days Silvestre's entire command fled towards Melilla piecemeal.

On 23 July his 2ic, Gen Felipe Navarro, fell back from Dar Drius towards Monte Arruit (about 20 straight-line miles to his east) with some 2,500 troops, but these were reduced to about 900 during their slow retreat. On the 23rd/24th the high commissioner, Gen Berenguer, arrived in Melilla almost alone, to find only about 1,800 mostly service troops, and magazines emptied by sales on the black market. However, on the 24th the arrival from Ceuta of Gen José Sanjurjo with a battalion of Line Inf Regt No 71 and the 1st and 2nd Banderas of the Tercio began to calm the civilians' panic, and these were soon followed by two tabors of Regulares from Ceuta's Grupo No 3.

On the 29th, under fire, Navarro finally reached Monte Arruit, where he tried to hold out under appalling conditions with about 3,000 accumulated fugitives. Meanwhile, local tribes from the Gurugu and the surrounding plains had joined the rising, and were threatening Melilla itself. Navarro

C SPANISH TROOPS, 1923–24

(1) *Artillero*, 4a *Regimiento Ligero de Artilleria*, 1923
This gunner's branch-of-service is identified by the halved dark blue-over-red barracks cap, and the flaming shell badges on his tunic collar and belt plate. For night sentry duty he carries a Spanish Mauser 7mm M1916 'short rifle', and for this static task he wears only one belt pouch and the bayonet. Reflecting inefficient Spanish logistics, the artilleryman has acquired a *chilaba* for lack of a practical greatcoat. In August 1921 troops in Africa were ordered issued a long khaki hooded cloak with a deep separate collar (*capote-manta)*, but this was little seen – apart from private purchases by officers – before the order was repeated in July 1926.

(2) *Teniente, Regimiento de Cazadores de Caballeria* No 22 *Victoria Eugenia*; Xaouen, 1924
An order of 19 April 1920 specified all-year-round khaki uniforms, and introduced extensive changes to officers' regulations, but the latter were countermanded on 18 June. However, officers who had ordered new uniforms in the interim were permitted to wear them, and an order of 12 June 1922 confirmed this as service dress. The 'British-style' open-collar, 4-pocket tunic with four brown leather front buttons is worn with a pale khaki shirt; light brown necktie (often knitted), and gold tiepin beneath the knot; all-khaki breeches (including the crotch reinforcement), and riding boots. A brown 'Sam Browne' belt supported a personal choice of revolver or semi-automatic pistol, holstered on the right. The cap badges were the crown above a branch-of-service badge on the band (for cavalry, all silver, with crossed lances), and unit numbers were worn above a smaller version on the upper collar. However, the six light-horse regiments granted special distinctions displayed instead their own badges on the cap band and collar; that of Regt No 22 incorporated Queen Victoria Eugenia's Battenberg family arms. Field officers – *comandante* to *coronel* – wore their 8-point stars on the cuff, and subalterns – *alferez* to *capitán* – their 6-point stars above it. (After Bueno, *Los Cazadores de Caballeria*.)

(3) *Cabo, Tercio de Extranjeros*, 1924
While this *legionario* wears the Tercio's common summer shirtsleeve order, its uniform differed from the Line's in several details (see also Plate H1). The four-pocket tunic in a greenish khaki shade had a turn-down collar, worn by all ranks with that of the Tercio's pale green shirt open and folded down outside it. The shoulder straps bore the corps' badge in brass – a crossed arquebus and crossbow set against a vertical halberd. This NCO displays a khaki breast-patch with three red bars representing the corporal's tunic forearm stripes. On his left sleeve is one of the Spanish Army's red wound chevrons, awarded for each separate wound. On the right of his *chambergo* a vertical 3-bar patch pointed at the top indicates his rank, and he has pinned the Tercio's badge to the front. Frequently seen alongside or replacing the *chambergo* in group photos was the Tercio's then-unique *'isabelino'* field cap (see Plate H1). For rankers this had red piping along the top edge of the flap and the top 'ridge' terminating in a red frontal tassel; the same NCOs' rank patches were worn on the right of the flap.

Another unique feature was the Tercio's Mills webbing equipment, purchased from the British in Gibraltar. Although Britain had huge surplus stocks of its World War I Pattern 1908 set, this does not seem to be shown in Spanish photos. Records are incomplete as to which set (or sets) the Tercio received, but photos from 1921 onwards clearly show these 'reducing width' shoulder braces; cartridge carriers with one pouch above three on each side; and the 1919-patent belt buckle used by the British up to and including their 1958 set. These details are all compatible with both a 'Canadian 1919' set, and one which was later designated as the 'RAF 1925' pattern. Photos show cartridge pouches with both 1908 snap-fastened flaps and the 1914 Mk II with an upwards strap. British water bottles were also supplied, and 'small packs' to be worn on the back. By the Alhucemas landings in 1925 the first Spanish leather copies of the webbing set were coming into use.

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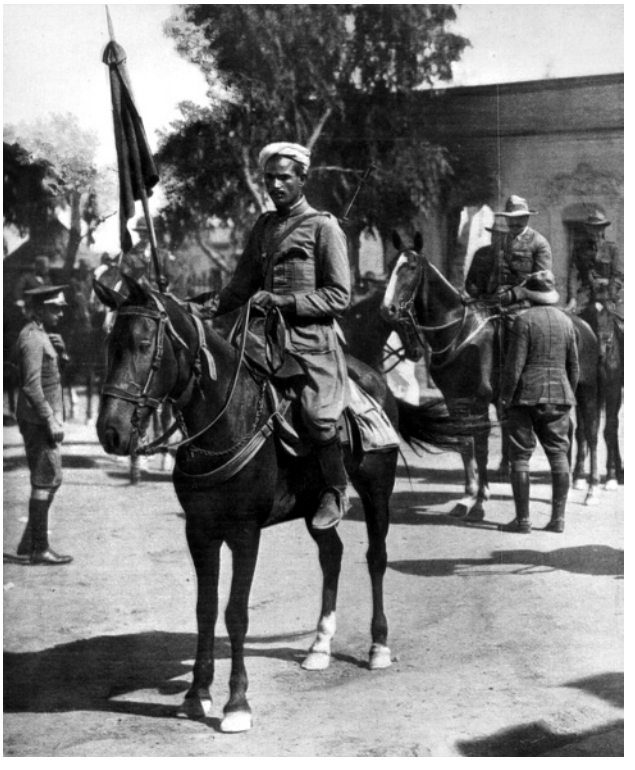


Regulares cavalry standard-bearer of the bodyguard of the Spanish high commissioner, Gen Dámaso Berenguer, after the recapture of Nador on 13 August 1921. Berenguer was one of those who reacted to the massacres, and what he regarded as Rifian treachery, by advocating the use of poison gas; this began the following autumn. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

was soon cut off and surrounded by up to 5,000 mixed tribesmen. He was eventually persuaded to surrender on 9 August by a promise that prisoners would be spared; he and his officers were, but at least 2,600 prisoners were butchered on the spot. Life or death were decided by individual rebel leaders: when Nador fell on 3 August its small garrison was spared, but some 500 men at Zeluan airfield were not. In all, of roughly 570 prisoners taken from the field alive, 326 would survive to be ransomed in January 1923.

The cost

This disaster reduced the Melilla Comandancia to its 1908 size, and cost Spain at least 8,000 soldiers killed among some 13,000 total casualties. The tribes had taken a vast amount of military loot: at least 20,000 Mauser rifles, perhaps up to 400 machine guns, great quantities of ammunition, and up to 130 artillery pieces (three of which they immediately used to shell Melilla, manned by coerced prisoners). In Madrid, the Spanish government fell on 3 August. Abd el Krim's name soon went around the world; on 17 August his portrait occupied the front cover of *TIME* magazine in the USA, and in September he proclaimed a Rifian state.

Melilla Command, briefly under Gen Cavalcanti, was reinforced up to some 47,000 men by early September, but, lacking necessary equipment, most of this disorganized crowd were green Peninsular reservists quite unready for battle. The hard-fought recapture of the Gurugu and the rest of the promontory during September–November was achieved by only about half that number, of whom the infantry comprised:

Spanish prisoners in Rifian hands moving a captured artillery piece. As many as 80 of the 130-odd guns lost after Annual remained serviceable. One source lists 70mm Schneiders (x19); 75mm St Chamonds (x19), Schneiders (x4), and 7.5cm Krupps (x4); 8cm Krupps (x20); and 9cm Krupps (x14). Spanish prisoners were coerced into teaching their captors how to serve the guns, alongside deserters from the Sultanate's notoriously badly paid army, and later foreign mercenaries. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

Tercio: 1st, 2nd & 4th Banderas; *Regulares:* 2–3 tabors of Ceuta's Grupo No 3[1]
Line Inf Regts: reconstituted Nos 68 Africa & 59 Melilla (each 3x bns). Either 1 or 3 bns each from: Nos 11 Borbón, 36 Burgos, 15 Extramadura, 34 Granada, 23 Valencia and 71 Corona.
Cazadores Bns Alcántara & Almanza; Disciplinary Bde; irregular *harkas* of Beni Sicar (x2), Beni Sidel & Frajana.

Abd el Krim's hard core pulled back westwards with their loot during October, while local tribes continued resistance. As the Spanish advanced they established new defensive outposts, which left only about 10,000 men in 12 battalions to push on to and up the Kert river. The lost territory as far as Dar Drius was only re-occupied (under the new Melilla GOC, Gen Sanjurjo) in January 1922. Meanwhile, new clans flocked to ally themselves with Abd el Krim, and for the next three years this would enable him to dominate all territory west of a line roughly from Afrau on the coast down to Zoco el Telata on the upper Kert.

The renowned *Tercio* officer Maj Francisco Franco (right – see also Plate H1) seen in conversation with a cavalry colonel wearing the *chambergo* and, over his khaki uniform, the sky-blue *pelissa* (see Plate A2). Franco has purchased a locally made heavy wool winter coat with a noticeably rough pile; its sleeve ranking is perhaps confused by blemishes on the photo, but the date is uncertain. This photo was allegedly taken at Dar Drius in 1921, but no *Tercio* units took part in Silvestre's spring advance; if the location is correct , it must date from Dar Drius's reoccupation in January 1922, when Maj Franco led 2nd and part of 1st *Bandera* of *'la Legión'*. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

AFTERMATH, 1921–24

Tizzi Azza and Tifarauín

In October 1921 M'hamed Abd el Krim led a Rifian force west across the Gomara region as far as the river Lau, seeking anti-Spanish alliances at the expense of Raisuli. A year later Madrid ordered Raisuli's reappointment as governor of the Yebala; he continued his habitual double-dealing with the Spanish, while rightly fearing the extension of Abd el Krim's power westwards.

During 1922–23 most Spanish conscripts held defensive positions while the strengthened Tercio and Regulares dominated active operations (to the resentment of many Peninsular officers). Seven months of Rifian pressure around the strategic Tizzi Azza pass culminated in early June 1923, when a major attack was only driven back at a final cost of some 2,000 Spanish casualties – including the then-commander of the Tercio, LtCol Rafael de Valenzuela, killed in close combat. (Major Franco's excellent record then led to his promotion to succeed Valenzuela.) In this period total strength in Morocco was about 63,000, of whom 50,000-plus were in 63 single Peninsular battalions. Mehala Jalifiana battalions of the Sultanate's army would be expanded in 1924, and additional auxiliary *harkas* and *mehallas* were also raised.

1 The increasingly key part played by these two elite corps was emphasized by their expansion. In October 1921 the Tercio formed a new 4th Bandera, and each battalion received a fourth company. Companies were numbered sequentially, i.e. 1st Bandera = 1, 2, 3 (MG) & 13 Cos; 2nd Bandera = 4, 5, 6 (MG) & 14 Cos, etc. The 5th and 6th Banderas were formed in November 1921 and September 1922 respectively, and a 7th in May 1925, all headquartered in the Ceuta Command but deployed wherever needed. The Regulares Groups (Nos 1 of Tetuán, 2 of Melilla, 3 of Ceuta & 4 of Larache) were joined from July 1922 by No 5 of Alhucemas.

Soldiers of the *Tercio* holding a sandbag position during the January 1922 fighting at Dar Drius. Note (left) a Hotchkiss MG team, and (right) an overheated and replaced barrel being cooled with water. Only one rifleman (right background) wears the sun-hat, and all others the *'isabelino'*. On the rear of the British Mills web equipment, P1908 water bottles and the 'small pack' are visible, but the belt, shoulder-braces and cartridge carriers are of a later pattern – see commentary to Plate C3. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

In August 1922 the high commissioner, Gen Ricardo Buerguete, pushed troops both south and west, and eventually reached Midar (7 September saw the first use of gas shells, by Spanish 155s in Dar Drius). By 7 November

Armoured units

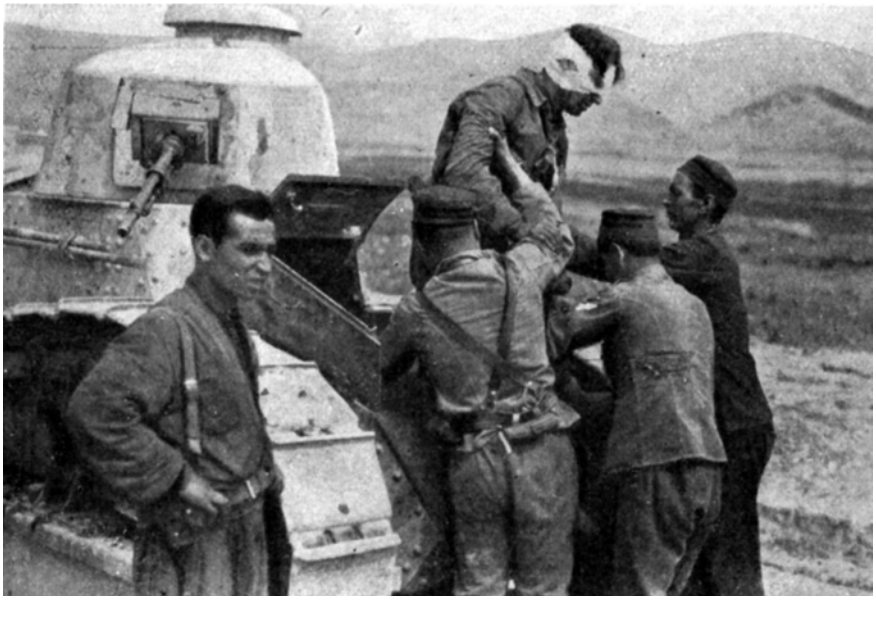
Spain The army was eager for armoured fighting vehicles, and the government persuaded France to sell it 11 Renault FT-17 machine-gun tanks plus one equipped for radio communication, which arrived in January 1922 to form a *Compania Renault de Carros de Asalto Infanteria*. Spain also purchased six Schneider CA-1 75mm-gun heavy tanks to be used as mobile artillery. The Schneiders went into action first on 14 March 1922, followed on the 18th by the Renaults; during fighting at Ambar and Tugunz two of the latter were disabled, one being lost. Thereafter the light tanks were mostly employed for convoy escort; Spain's poverty and France's reluctance delayed further purchases, but by 1925 the Spanish had managed to buy another 6 Renaults to replace losses.

The Spanish made considerable dispersed efforts to convert civilian vehicles into armoured cars, but most were badly underpowered for their increased weight. In 1921 the first protected truck and four conversions of Landa touring cars reached Morocco, as did the first three Nash Quads built on the chassis of the 2-ton Jeffrey Quad truck. Two more Quads arrived in April 1922, but of eight others ordered only three were delivered. During 1923–24 there were piecemeal deliveries of 13 conversions of the Latil heavy artillery truck, and in 1925 of another nine of an improved model. These and a handful of other conversions all varied in details, and only some had 7mm MG turrets. Their cross-country performance was poor, limiting them mainly to road escort work.

France After Moroccan trials with FT-17s of the 337th Tank Co in 1920–22 these returned to France, and tanks next arrived in May 1925, when a two-company Special Tank Bn of FT-17s was sent out. In July they were followed by a second battalion of three companies; one company had experimental Renault NC tanks with a new *kégresse* suspension with rubber rollers and track pads, but these proved too vulnerable for the terrain, and were withdrawn. For the September 1925 offensive the two battalions were designated the 517th Tank Regt, each with three 15-tank companies; each company had four 3-tank fighting platoons, each platoon having two MG-armed tanks and one with the Puteaux 37mm gun. A number of White-Laffley M1918 armoured cars were also deployed in separate companies, but these, like their Spanish counterparts, had limited cross-country performance.

One of the six French Schneider CA1 heavy tanks purchased by Spain, armed with a 75mm main gun at right front and two machine guns; they formed an Artillery Assault Battery to provide rear support for the Renault light tanks of the Infantry Tank Assault Company. The camouflage scheme is a dark sand-yellow ground overpainted with angular areas of red-brown, which are irregularly edged with dark green. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

1922 a line was stabilizing between Afrau and Midar, with a Spanish salient around the Tizzi Azza pass. Abd el Krim's retaliatory counter-offensive would last for many months, centred on Tizzi Azza but including attacks elsewhere. Spanish reactions would be hampered by the replacement of Gen Burguete in February 1923 by a civilian high commissioner, Luis Silvela, who limited military operations while attempting to negotiate (although he would also authorize gas-bombing of Moroccan villages that July and August).



Battle of Tizzi Azza, June 1923: the driver of a Renault FT-17 is helped to climb out after suffering a head wound. Tanks were used to protect Spanish convoys carrying reinforcements to the beleaguered positions guarding the pass, which had been under enemy pressure since the previous November. Although the armour gave protection from snipers, the summer heat made it unbearable for crews to travel for long with the hatches closed. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

It was also in February 1923 that Abd el Krim had himself proclaimed *Amir/ Emir* ('prince') of the Rif. Thereafter he gathered a reported 9,000 warriors to surround Tifarauín, SW of Afrau. In mid-August 1923 two relief attempts by 12-plus battalions were repulsed with heavy Spanish losses, and Gen Sanjurjo then launched a major effort north of Tizzi Azza. General Fernández Pérez's main attack would deploy 6 Peninsular battalions, 3 of the Tercio led by LtCol Franco, 6 of Regulares, plus 3 auxiliary harkas. In support and diversion, Gen Pardo landed at Afrau on 21 August, with a Peninsular battalion and three harkas. Converging columns then drove the Rifians out of the hills around Tifarauín, which was relieved on the 22nd by an elite column from Fernández's force.

1923–24: Primo de Rivera's retreat in the west

Despite the success at Tifarauín, in summer 1923 Spanish morale was low, with some officers as well as many of the public favouring an *'abandonista'* policy. Government authority was collapsing amid anti-mobilization mutinies and riots in Barcelona and Malaga. In October, a coup installed Gen Miguel Primo de Rivera as dictator at the head of a military government. He had combat experience in Morocco and was generally trusted, but he made no secret that he favoured at least partial military withdrawal and negotiations with Moroccan regional leaders. He bought time by making ambiguous speeches about his intentions, while introducing some popular reforms.

D

BERBER WARRIORS, 1921–26
(See errata, imprint page)

(1) Berber tribal levy, 1921
This generic figure represents the poorer-class tribal warriors who made up the great majority of Abd el Krim's followers. The loosely rolled and coiled white turban often left the scalp bare, but sometimes covered it with a single layer of cloth. Under the *chilaba* most wore a lighter-weight white or off-white garment: a long, round-necked, shorter-sleeved *gandoura,* or a long, hooded, full-sleeved *djubba* – either or both might be worn, depending upon conditions. This *chilaba* is of solid brown wool with minimal decoration; as usual, the hoods of both *djubba* and *chilaba* are thrown back over the shoulders. Loose-cut white trousers end just below the knee, and this levy in his 50s wears the most basic plaited-grass sandals. His only visible equipment is an all-purpose *skala* slung to his hip, to carry ammunition, rations of bread or grain and dates, and other small necessities; most were of leather, often with decorative patterns on the flap and hanging fringes. Before Annual, rifles were in short supply and of elderly but still lethal types. This one is a French 11mm single-shot M1874 Gras rifle, a type widely stolen and/ or traded from Algeria since the 1890s. (Other obsolescent types in use included a few ancient M1866 Chassepots, and more numerous M1871 Remingtons and Martini-Henrys, M1873 Albinis, and M1874 Martini-Peabodys.) By the 1920s tribesmen with such antique arms usually had to rely on local re-loaders of expended brass cartridges, who refilled them with black powder and used ground-down red matches and petrol to replace the percussion caps. While Rifians were noted for their marksmanship, misfires were therefore common.

(2) Rifleman, Abd el Krim's Rifian bodyguard, 1924–25
This mostly speculative reconstruction represents the warriors selected for their skills and loyalty from M'hamed Abd el Krim's trained regular brigade, and generously paid. The bodyguard (and senior Rifian government officials) wore green turbans. For the regular brigade, sources mention a blue turban with an attached white patch bearing a number in Arabic – in this case 'twenty'– but here, lacking photographic evidence, we frankly take a guess that displaying it on the *chilaba* would be more practical. This *chilaba,* with white trim showing tufted knots, is from a 1921–22 photo showing two clearly senior warriors both wearing very similar clothing. His shoes are the heelless *'babouches'* slippers which he can now afford, in traditional yellow-tanned leather. He is armed with a French 8mm Lebel M1886/ 93 rifle, of which some 18,000 were reportedly landed by a British gun-runner in June 1924 in the Bocoya tribal country west of Axdir. Prized for its 8-round magazine, accuracy and stopping-power, the Lebel was the priority choice for the Rifian 'regulars' and other well-funded groups. If this rifleman is a Bocoya, he would have been selected for the bodyguard from either the 4th or 5th tabor of the regular brigade.

(3) Rifian regular artilleryman, 1925–26
The trained artillerymen (and, according to one source, machine-gunners) of the Rifian regular brigade were reportedly distinguished by black turbans; such men presumably dispersed when qualified, to spread their skills among other crews. Otherwise this figure is simply a composite from period photos. The gunner holds a shell for a captured French 75mm M1897 field gun; between late April and the end of June 1925 the French lost a reported 51 artillery pieces (mostly '75s') and nearly 17,000 shells. For close-quarter combat he carries an old Oviedo-made M1871 Remington 'rolling block' carbine.

2
1
3

Three men of *Regulares Grupo No. 2 de Melilla* killed in the fighting at Tizi Azza, about to be loaded from stretchers into an ambulance. It was important to strictly observe the dictates of their religion: fatalities were taken directly to a sanctified Muslim cemetery, and buried within 24 hours of their death. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

General Miguel Primo de Rivera (right), installed at the head of Spain's government by the military coup of October 1923, meets field officers in Morocco. The latter wear the officers' superior variant of the *chambergo* with a stitching-reinforced band, which sometimes displayed a rank patch on the left side. Many *Tercio* and *Regulares* officers strongly objected to Rivera's decision to abandon roughly half of Spain's western territory in autumn 1924, but he managed to avoid a mutiny – partly by increasing army pay, among other popular reforms. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

In NW Morocco, spring–summer 1924 saw both sides obliged to commit reinforcements during months of fighting along the river Lau SE of Tetuán. There a young Regulares veteran named Ahmed Heriro, of the Beni Hozmar tribe, distinguished himself as a combat leader against the Spanish while also encouraging shifts in tribal loyalties from Raisuli towards Abd el Krim. In July 1924, while this campaign was raging, Primo de Rivera made a tour of inspection, and was shocked by the poor state of army readiness and morale.

Consequently, on 8 September he announced his decision to withdraw troops in the Ceuta Command westwards and northwards, to occupy a strong new 'Estella Line' of posts defending only about half of Spain's previous western territory (see 'Primo Line', Map 2). This decision enraged many officers, particularly of the Regulares and Tercio, but Primo de Rivera's skilful diplomacy averted the threatened mutiny. From October to mid-December 1924 he personally oversaw the difficult and costly process of withdrawal from some 180 posts. This culminated in a 40,000-man operation to manage the retreat from Xauen to Tetuán in November–December. The composition of the enlarged garrison and its supporting elements was representative of the Spanish army in Morocco at that date:

Spanish air power

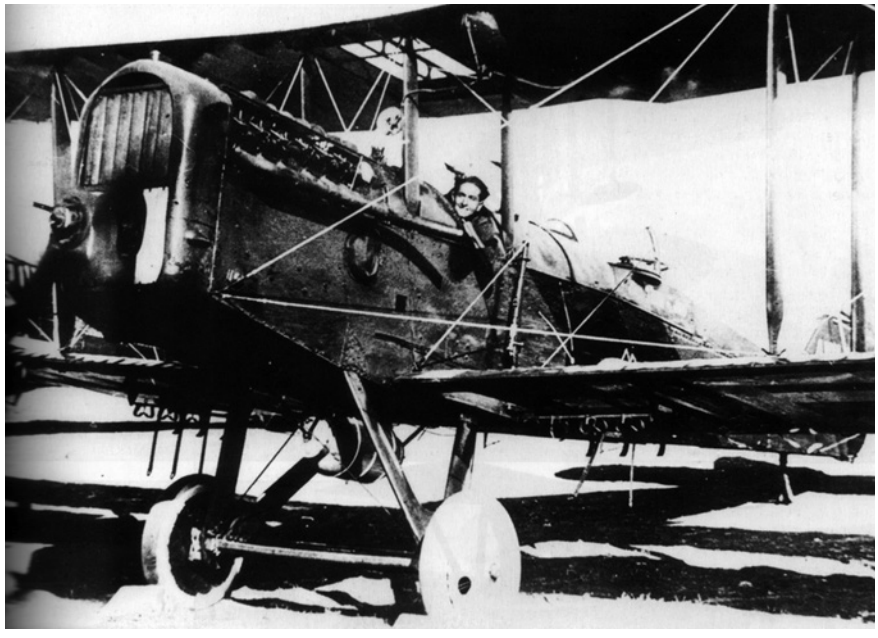
In Morocco, by 1921 four Spanish units of varying strength totalled 16x British DH-4s, 8x French Breguet 14 A2s, and 3x French Farman F-50s. In the Ceuta Command, by April 1922 *1a Grupo* at Tetuán had two squadrons of Breguets and a flight of Farmans, and *2a Grupo* at Larache had two Breguet squadrons. In the Melilla Command, *3a Grupo* had three DH-4 squadrons, and *4a Grupo* two squadrons of British Bristol F2Bs, one of DH-9As and one of Martinsyde F4s. The latter were single-seat fighters, the others all two-seat reconnaissance/ light bomber types. A naval air arm was also established in 1922, with various Italian seaplanes. Given the relatively short distances, units based in either Command flew missions wherever air support was needed. Over four years, aircrews learned the hard way how to operate in the most challenging conditions and terrain. They became battle-hardened, establishing a culture of low-altitude attacks, and it was claimed that they were more feared by the rebels than the French pilots they would face in 1925–26.

By September 1925 several more modern types had been acquired. Spanish air support for the Alhucemas landings would come mainly from two of three formations then designated as *Escuadras*. The *1a Escuadra* had 25x Breguet 14s, 6x DH-4s, 4x DH-9As, 6x Potez 15s, and 15x Bristol F2Bs, while *3a Escuadra* operated 15x Fokker CIVs and 15x Breguet 19s. Additionally, the seaplanes numbered 7x Dornier J Wals, 14x Savoia S16s, 6x Macchi M18s and 6x Supermarine Scarabs. Of these, 15 flew from Melilla's Atalyón base, and the rest from the Spanish Navy seaplane tender/ carrier *Dédalo,* which could carry 18 at a time.

Bombing & gas The grisly fate of so many soldiers in the retreat from Annual horrified and enraged many Spanish, both military and civilian, who believed that it excused Spain from any humanitarian scruples over bombing civilian targets and burning vital crops. Pilots naturally sought military targets as a priority, but the nature of this war meant that civilian casualties were often inevitable. Nor was Spain alone during the interwar period in employing even poison gas against rebels and civilian targets (*viz* the Soviet Union, Japan and Italy). The Army had first used gas shells in September 1922; Spain acquired mustard gas and tear gas agents from Germany and technical assistance from France, and manufactured ordnance (in secrecy, to avoid public protest) at a chemical factory near Madrid. Aerial gas-bombing of military and civilian targets began in 1923, by a few Farman F60 Goliaths purchased from France. It appears to have ceased in 1925, after a League of Nations ban on the use of chemical weapons.

The 'phantom' Rif air force Spanish aircrew were ordered to destroy their machines if they survived crash-landings in enemy territory, and bombers successfully located and destroyed others. However, Abd el Krim persisted in efforts to acquire aircraft and hire mercenary pilots. In December 1923 his agents managed to buy a Dorand AR2 in Algeria from a bankrupt French company. A company pilot flew it to eastern Morocco, and in January 1924 it was spotted south of Alhucemas (but was then lost track of for two months). Re-located at Tizzi Moren, it was such a high priority target that on 22–23 March squadrons of DH-9As and Bristol F2Bs dropped 540 bombs and strafed the wreckage. The Rifians failed to acquire any other flyable aircraft.

Xaouen garrison-plus, September–November 1924
Tercio: 1st–6th Banderas. *Regulares:* Grupos Nos 1 de Tetuán, 3 de Ceuta, 4 de Larache & 5 de Alhucemas.
Peninsular Line Inf Regts: Nos 49 Otumba, 60 Ceuta & 69 Serrallo.
Single bns from regts: Nos 10 Córdoba, 36 Burgos, 41 Gravelines, 47 San Quintin, 55 Asia, 63 Mahón, 68 Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 73 Badajoz, 74 Valladolid, & 77 Military Orders.
Expeditionary bns from regts: Nos 6 Saboya, 16 Castilla, 27 Cuenca & 34 Granada.
1st Cazadores Bde – Bns: Nos 1 Madrid, 4 Barbastro, 6 Figueras, 9 Arapiles & 11 Llerena.



De Havilland DH-4 reconnaissance-bomber of the *Aeronáutica Militar Española*. Spain had bought 45 DH-4s in 1919, and in spring 1922 still had three squadrons operational in the Melilla Command. Some were DH-4Bs, which mounted a forward-firing machine gun as well as the gunner's twin Lewis guns. This machine is believed to be that named 'Santa Teresa de Rolls', fin-marking 'AVILA' (the city whose subscriptions paid for it), and rudder-number 'H-48'. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

Separate Cazadores Bns: Nos 3 San Fernando, 12 Segorbe, 15 Ceriñola & 18 Talavera.
Allied irregular Mehalas: Larache, Tetuán & Xaouen. *Harkas:* Xaouen, Muñoz Grandes de Melilla.
Peninsular cavalry: sqn, Caz de Cab Regt No 22 Victoria Eugenia.

M'hamed Abd el Krim and Ahmed Heriro, already on the spot with powerful forces, flexibly exploited the difficulties of the withdrawals to the maximum, and the fighting by Spanish relief and break-out columns was often desperate. After leaving Xaouen on 12 November the garrison was attacked in strength, and when its rearguard of Tercio and Regulares battalions was badly mauled it had to halt at Zoco el Arbaá for three tense weeks. However, it resumed its march on 10 December, and reached Tetuán on the 15th. Meanwhile, in the Larache sector, Gen Riquelme manoeuvred skilfully to relieve and extract westwards many more garrisons by 16 December. In all, Spanish casualties (exaggerated in some sources) seem to have totalled between 7,000 and 10,000, with many weapons lost. However, although it seems counter-intuitive, Primo de Rivera's determination and competence in organizing this major retreat and establishing his Estella Line steadied military morale.

In January 1925 M'hamed Abd el Krim captured Raisuli, his armoury and treasury. Shipped to the central Rif, Raisuli died that April.

OPPOSITE
The *Chicago Tribune* reporter Larry Rue (centre) photographed while visiting Abd el Krim's headquarters at Axdir. The *Amir* kept himself well informed about international events, and made use of foreign correspondents to spread a favourable image. While he granted them access, he carefully controlled what they saw and heard. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

ABD EL KRIM'S ZENITH, 1924–25

Political status

At the turn of 1924/ 25 the Spanish retreat in the west, and the elimination of Raisuli, had handed the Abd el Krims the initiative. They were free to operate in the whole area outside a Spanish western front shaped roughly

like an upside-down 'L' south of Tetuán and east of Alcazarqivir; as far eastwards as Tizzi Azza; and southwards almost to the French zonal border.

Abd el Krim had already created a functioning regime (in Arabic, the *Jumhūriyya ar-Rif)* based at his birthplace of Axdir/ Ajdir just inland from Alhucemas Bay, with ministers – particularly those responsible for finance, logistics and military equipment – chosen mostly from among his Beni Urriaguel relatives. Unifying instinctively independent *caids* into a pan-tribal alliance involved a constant interplay of power relationships, but both his military and his religious prestige strengthened him. A general tax was levied on the harvests of all tribes under Rifian control, and fines for collective disobedience also swelled the exchequer. Further finance came from European mining and other commercial interests which were willing to gamble on Abd el Krim's eventual success.

He kept himself well informed about world affairs, and exploited the foreign press to create the image of a reasonable statesman seeking national self-determination. His agents were active overseas in repeated attempts to gain some measure of international recognition, but, despite encouragement from both French anti-colonialists and British businessmen, these were unsuccessful. Naturally, Britain, France and Italy were all concerned that Abd el Krim's example might encourage Muslim risings in their own colonies.

Spanish officer losses during the retreats of late 1924 had been serious. On 18 November 1924 LtCol Claudio Temprano Domingo was killed while leading a charge by troopers of *Regulares Grupo No 3 de Ceuta* in the hard-pressed rearguard of the retreating Xaouen garrison. (That day also cost the lives of two battalion commanders, and Gen Serrano Orive.) Temprano was posthumously awarded Spain's highest decoration, the Laureate Cross of San Fernando. This portrait dates from 1922, when he commanded the cavalry *tabor* of *Regulares Grupo No 5 de Alhucemas*. Note his unbadged red *tarbouche;* the shirt collar worn '*Tercio*-style', above the crowned silver lances-and-crescent badges of *Regulares* cavalry on his tunic collar; and the *comandante's* single embroidered silver rank star on his cuffs. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

Fine 1923 portrait of a Berber *caid*, reportedly a man named Ben Chel-lal of the Beni Bu Ifrur tribe; note that he displays the triple red head-cords of a tribal *tabor* commander (see Plate E1). Although the Beni Bu Ifrur had been the original rebels south of Melilla in 1909, and played a prominent part in the massacres of 1921, this chieftain surrendered in 1923. The alliances orchestrated by Abd el Krim were always provisional, and he had to exercise careful vigilance to maintain control of tribal leaders. (Courtesy Cody of Images)

Rifian forces

The Spanish could never believe that Abd el Krim did not have European military staff advisers. In fact, the only Europeans he employed were a handful of deserters and soldiers-of-fortune who were used purely as technicians and instructors – e.g., the Germans Otto Noja and Joseph Klemms, who established his telephone and mapping systems respectively. While the press exaggerated the significance of the few European renegades in his service, Abd el Krim never allowed them any independent authority, and his most influential and respected training officer was in fact a Regulares veteran known as *Caid* Bohut.

Opinions about Rifian strength still vary, since a system of rotating mobilization makes any figures difficult to date or verify. One plausible source is a 1932 book by Gen Manuel Goded Loppis, who had interviewed Abd el Krim after his surrender.[2] While others have disputed his figures, Goded states that the Abd el Krim brothers' total *potential* armed strength

2 *Marruecos: Las Etapas de la Pacificación*; reprinted by Salamina Ediciones, 2021.

E

BERBER WARRIORS, 1923–26
(See errata, imprint page)

(1) *Caid* of tribal levies, 1923
This is a composite figure from photos of two unrelated leaders. The portrait and costume are taken from photos of Ben Chel-lal of the Beni Bu Ifrur, who surrendered to the Spanish Gen Riquelme in 1923. He wears on his head a white skull cap and djubba, under a large *tagelmust* head-cloth. The latter shows the three red cords identifying the status of a *tabor* commander; two and one cords, respectively, identified the leaders of a 100-man company and a 50-man half-company. This system may also have been employed in the Rifian 'regular' brigade, but one source describes for regular officers a similar sequence of green stripes sewn to turbans, including a half-stripe for leaders of 25-man platoons. Photos suggest that *chilabas* woven in striped patterns – usually of two or three alternating colours, in narrow and/ or medium-width stripes – seldom bore applied trimming, but note the commonly seen horizontally striped upper sleeves and vertical striping elsewhere. Ben Chel-lal's photos are among several showing the satchel being worn slung under rather than over the *chilaba*. From a separate photo we copy a highly decorated example of a (seldom worn) waist belt, into which are tucked a *jambiya* dagger slung on cords and (speculatively) a captured Spanish 9mm Campo Giro M1912 pistol.

(2) Rifian standard-bearer, May 1926
This standard of the Rifian state is one captured by Spanish troops as the war ended; note that the white diamond is slightly off-set towards the 'fly'. We show the bearer wearing a small, tightly wound white turban often seen in photos of Moroccans of some standing. A posed photo of a standard-bearer includes a simple solid-coloured *chilaba* with plain pale trim including visible buttoning all the way down the front (see also photo of German mercenaries on page 57). Note the method of slinging his weapon (here a French 8mm Berthier M1916 carbine) horizontally across behind his shoulders, as often seen in photos.

(3) *Regulares* deserter weapons-instructor, 1924
This probable former NCO of the Spanish *Regulares* cavalry is employed by the Rifian government. He wears a white knit skull-cap to emphasize his Muslim faith, and retains his 'chickpea' breeches with brown leggings and ankle boots, under a white *djubba* and a *chilaba*. His weapon is the 7mm Spanish Oviedo-made licensed version of the French Hotchkiss M1922 light machine gun, of which Spain produced about 3,000, fed from a 20-round top-mounted magazine instead of the usual Hotchkiss horizontal cartridge strip. In Spanish service these were issued to the 'mixed' squadrons armed with both MGs and LMGs, which began to replace each tabor's former MG squadron from 1922.

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A Berber machine-gunner manning a captured Spanish 7mm M1914 Hotchkiss, apparently of the variant with a shoulder stock and pistol-grip trigger group. Sources differ; one states that only about 60 such guns were captured in 1921, another claims as many as 400. The rebels also used ransoms paid for Spanish officer prisoners to buy more. Trained in their use by local veterans, the rebels initially had about one MG to every 100–200 riflemen, and French combat officers praised their skilful handling in battle. Although amateur maintenance and shortage of spare parts must have taken a steady toll, the Spanish alone would retrieve more than 200 machine guns in spring 1926. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

OPPOSITE
Map 2: Northern Morocco, 1921–26; (detail) Oued Ouergha front, 1925–26. (Map by John Richardson, © Martin Windrow)

was up to 80,000, but – crucially – that they could never field more than about 20,000 at any one time.

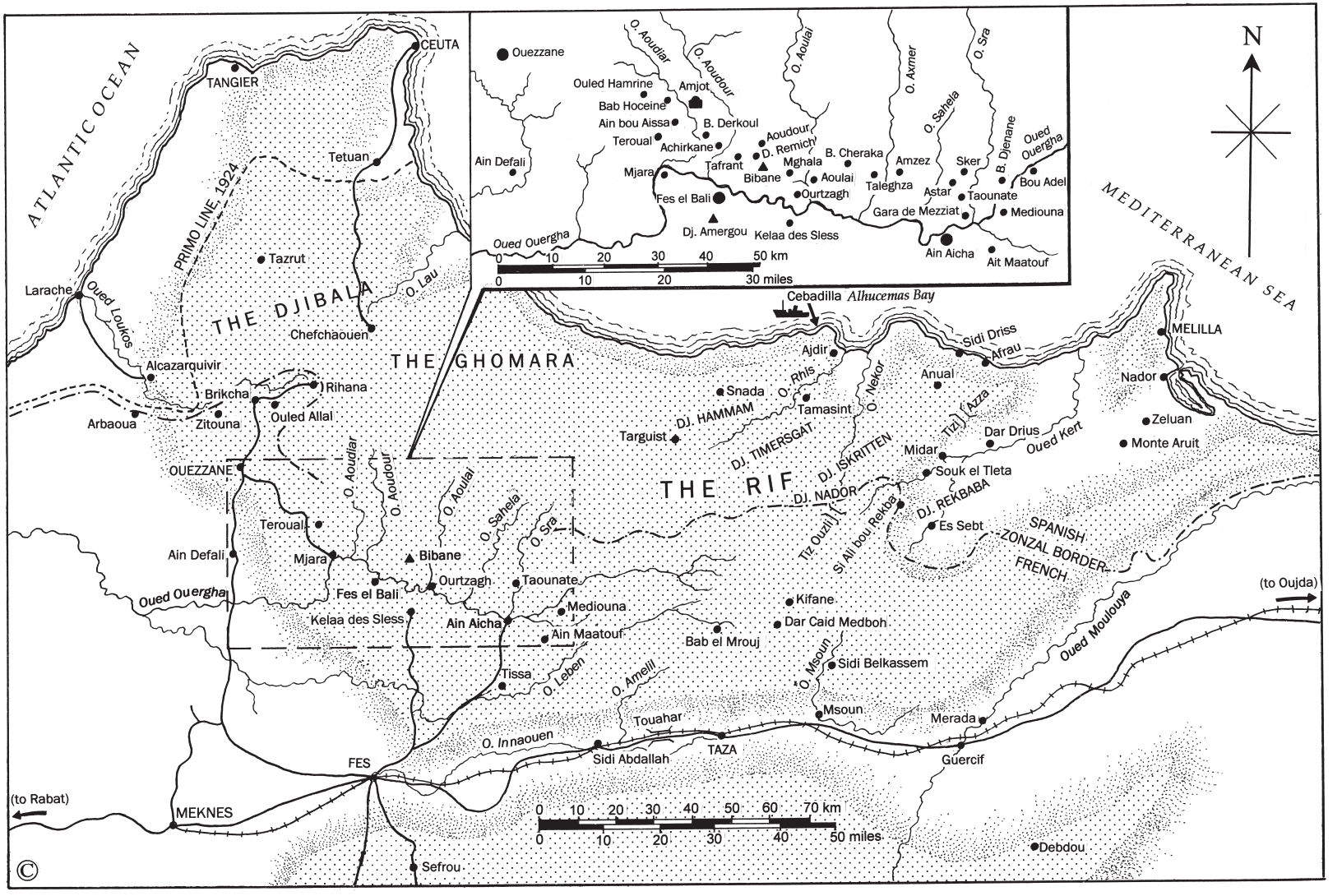
Well aware of the fragile loyalty of many of his allies, Abd el Krim entrusted his younger brother with creating a 'regular' five-battalion brigade of up to 7,000 picked infantry (plus artillery), of which the first three units were exclusively Beni Urriaguel, and the others mainly Temsaman, Bocoya, Ait Tuzin and Gzinnaya (in roughly proportional order). These men were trained with modern weapons, and paid on a sliding scale according to rank and specialist skills. They were organized in 25-man *hamsain u ashreen* platoons, 50-man *hamsain* half-companies, 100-man *mia* companies, and *tabor* battalions of a few hundred.

Apart from these regulars, the Rifian forces consisted of unpaid part-time tribal levies, routinely stiffened for operations with heavily armed detachments from the regular brigade. Men aged between about 16 and 60, from territories nearest to a campaign objective, were called up via their tribal elders for only between seven and 15 days at a time in successive months, so as to allow vital agricultural work to continue. Their officers were chosen from among the most able *caids*, approved by the leadership and trusted to exercise direct discipline. Rifian government agents supervised the levies; strict rules of service were established, and even circulated in handbooks for the small literate minority. A central prison at Axdir – one of three – often held tribal leaders awaiting trial for desertion or insubordination, and death sentences were not uncommon. Any peripheral clans which refused Rifian service were ruthlessly punished: for instance, in May 1925 Abd el Krim reportedly set an example by having some 400 reluctant allies shot and their leaders beheaded.

Weapons

The military booty from 1921 and 1924, and turncoat or mercenary instructors, had greatly increased the Rifians' tactical impact, and the often-quoted figure of about 20,000 modern rifles in their hands seems to be a considerable underestimate. Apart from the captures of Spanish rifles, gun-runners hired in Tangier often evaded the Spanish naval blockade. For example, by June 1924 French intelligence estimated that 16,000 German Mausers had already been shipped in from Hamburg, which also provided Lee-Metfords captured from British naval troops in Antwerp in 1914. In June 1924 a British vessel reportedly landed 18,000 of the prized French Lebels in the Bocoya country west of Axdir. Initially ammunition had had to be gathered from the battlefield, but Abd el Krim's government bought in any local surpluses as well as importing supplies; the main government depot at Targuist distributed ammunition by pack-mule trains. The Taghzat clan of the southern allied Senadja Srir confederation specialized in recycling the explosive from dud or captured Spanish ordnance to produce hand grenades in considerable numbers.

In addition to many machine guns, from 1921 the Abd el Krims seem to have had about 80 serviceable captured artillery pieces in calibres ranging


ATLANTIC OCEAN
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N
CEUTA
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PRIMO LINE, 1924
Tazrut
Larache
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THE DJIBALA
O. Lau
Chefchaouen
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Brikcha
Rihana
Arbaoua
Zitouna
Ouled Allal
OUEZZANE
THE GHOMARA
Cebadilla Alhucemas Bay
Ajdir
Sidi Driss
Afrau
MELILLA
Nador
Zeluan
Monte Aruit
Snada
O. Rhis
Tamasint
O. Nekor
Anual
Tizi Azza
Dar Drius
Oued Kert
Midar
Souk el Tleta
Targuist
DJ. HAMMAM
DJ. TIMERSGAT
DJ. ISKRITTEN
DJ. NADOR
DJ. REKBABA
THE RIF
Tiz Ouzli
Si Ali bou Rekba
Es Sebt
SPANISH ZONZAL BORDER FRENCH
O. Aoudiar
O. Aoudour
O. Aoulai
O. Sahela
O. Sra
Teroual
Ain Defali
Mjara
Bibane
Ourtzagh
Taounate
Fes el Bali
Oued Ouergha
Kelaa des Sless
Ain Aicha
Ain Maatouf
Mediouna
Kifane
Dar Caid Medboh
Bab el Mrouj
Sidi Belkassem
O. Msoun
Msoun
Merada
Tissa
O. Leben
O. Amelil
Touahar
O. Innaouen
Sidi Abdallah
TAZA
Guercif
Oued Moulouya
(to Oujda)
FES
(to Rabat)
MEKNES
Sefrou
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Ouezzane
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Aoudour
D. Remich
Achirkane
Tafrant
Mghala
B. Cheraka
Bibane
Aoulai
Taleghza
Amzez
Sker
Astar
Taounate
Gara de Mezziat
Mediouna
Dj. Amergou
Kelaa des Sless
Ain Aicha
Ait Maatouf
O. Axmer
O. Sahela
O. Sra
B. Djenane
Oued Ouergha
Bou Adel
0 10 20 30 40 50 km
0 10 20 30 miles
©

from 65mm to 105mm (but mostly 75mm), and more after 1924. Reportedly some 350 Rifian regulars were trained to use them, by former gunners of the Sultanate's army and a few European mercenaries led by a Serbian former captain of Austro-Hungarian artillery. At first they tended to use their guns in ones or twos at close range, delivering effective direct fire on flimsily built European outposts. From simply 'walking' shells towards the target they later became more sophisticated, and there is even a mention of airbursts over one French post in 1925. Facing Tetuán on the western front, M'hamed Abd el Krim deployed dug-in artillery in battery strength and with considerable effect, and also managed to move guns across country.

The mixture of French soldiers manning this observation post on a rocky summit suggests one of the early Mobile Groups. The majority are North African *tirailleurs*, with khaki turbans wrapped loosely around their red caps. Sitting (centre) is a Foreign Legion sergeant wearing a *chèche* scarf, and displaying the two gold upwards-pointing forearm chevrons of a re-enlisted NCO. His comrade (far right), showing a single rank bar on his cuffs, is probably an *adjudant* warrant officer. (De Agostini/ Getty Images)

ABD EL KRIM'S GAMBLE, APRIL 1925

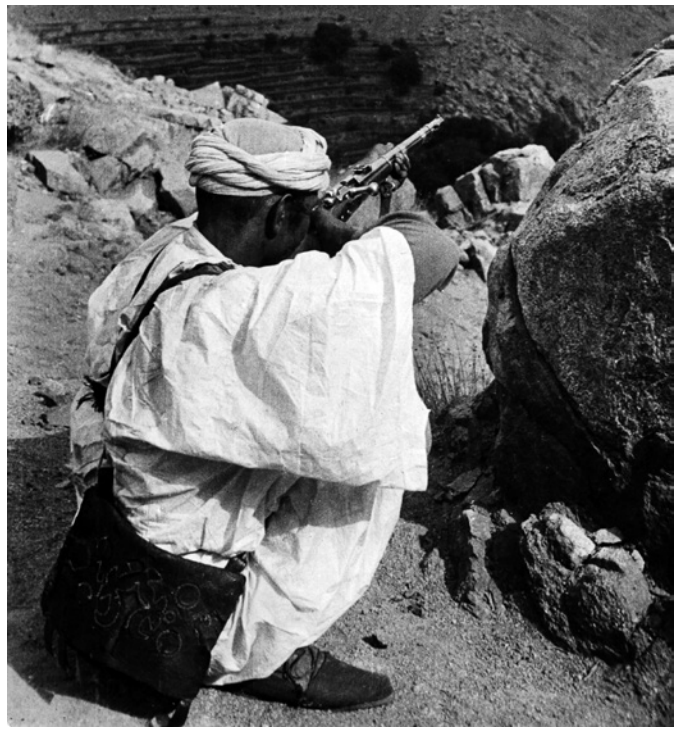
French precautions

Apart from extending his networks of intelligence agents, Marshal Lyautey had insisted on remaining aloof from Spain's problems, and intermediaries had repeatedly assured him that Abd el Krim had no designs on French Morocco.

The most important of the tribes straddling the zonal frontier south of the Gomara were the grain-rich Beni Zeroual on either side of the Ouergha river valley, who were wooed by both Abd el Krim and Lyautey. Since the former's methods were the more heavy-handed, from April 1924 some clan leaders accepted French subsidies to resist him. During May to July, with

their agreement, Lyautey established 40 small 'doorbell' outposts on hills north of the Ouergha.

From September 1924 the Spanish retreat in the west prompted Lyautey to increase these to 66 posts. He was responsible for protecting the Sultanate, and, although Abd el Krim always denied any ambition to depose the sultan, the potential threat only about 40 miles north of his capital, Fes, could not be ignored. Lyautey had some 50 infantry battalions among about 54,000 troops in the whole of French Morocco, many of them necessarily committed to the recently penetrated Middle Atlas to the south. In 1924 Lyautey pressed Paris for reinforcements, but the War Ministry dragged its feet. The first to arrive were the young French conscripts of the Morocco Colonial Infantry Regt (RICM) from the Rhineland, who would only reach the north Moroccan front in mid-April 1925.



In hot sunlight, a Berber rifleman aims his Mauser from the cover of rocks. He wears only a white *gandoura*; French witnesses often mention Rifians fighting in this white *'burnous'*, despite its high visibility. Note also the patterned flap and hanging fringe of the *skala* satchel at his hip, and his light shoes. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

Abd el Krim's reasons for dragging France into his war have been endlessly debated. He apparently perceived a serious threat in the French moves north of the Ouergha towards the zonal border, and, although some Beni Zeroual clans supported him, he had lost much of his access to that tribe's important 'breadbasket'. Finally, perhaps, it may simply have been the fact that a 'rolling' or 'serial' alliance like Abd el Krim's could only be held together by the rewards of repeated victories. He may have hoped to surprise the French badly enough to actually take Fes and/ or Taza; although

Rebels manning a captured Spanish gun. While Rifian artillery was used effectively on all fronts, the younger Abd el Krim achieved the most impressive results in the west. Gathering guns in battery strength in protected emplacements close to Tetuán, he was able to shell the city, nearby Spanish posts and batteries, and even ships off shore. In March 1922 other guns emplaced at Alhucemas Bay sank the Spanish warship *Juan de Juanes*. (Hulton Deutsch Colln./ CORBIS via Getty Images)

'La Coloniale' and *l'Armée d'Afrique*

The *Troupes Coloniales* included both white and African units, but the RICM was their only white infantry regiment to fight in the Rif (though a mixed Morocco Colonial Artillery Regt, RACM, also took part).

During 1923–26 several black Colonial *Régiments de Tirailleurs Sénégalais* (RTS) were redesignated *Régts de Tirailleurs Coloniaux* (RTC). In all, about 16 African battalions would fight in northern Morocco (from e.g. the 1st RTSM and 8th, 10th, 13th & 15th RTCs), plus the Madagascan 41st Regt of *Tirailleurs Malgaches*.

The *Armée d'Afrique* or XIX Army Corps, based in Algeria and Tunisia, included some European regiments: volunteers of the Foreign Legion (1st–4th REIs) and to a lesser extent conscript Zouaves (1st & 2nd RZs), plus two penal conscript battalions of Africa Light Infantry (3rd & 4th BILA, 'Bats d'Af').

North African 'skirmisher' regiments of *Tirailleurs Algériens, Tunisiens & Marocains* (RTAs, RTTs & RTMs) were at this date of mixed conscripts and volunteers. The term *de Marche* ('marching') in a unit title (e.g. 19e BMTA) indicated a task-organized force drawn from more than one parent unit.

Bataillon d'infanterie type Marocaine

Such units had an establishment of 700 men (but a field strength of only about 600) in three rifle companies and one eight-gun MG company. Each nominally 170-man rifle company had a command element and four 35-strong platoons (*sections*), each of three 11-man squads (*groupes*); two of these squads were riflemen-grenadiers, and the third was a light machine-gun squad built around a single M1915 CSRG 'Chauchat'. However, the immediately available rifle strength was reduced by the need to assign mule-handlers: each company had a 'combat train' of 11 mules, and nine more per company formed the rear 'battalion train', so a company in battle might have as few as 120 rifles.

In all, nine-plus Legion battalions, six of Zouaves and two Bats d'Af would fight in the Rif at times between April 1925 and May 1926. Sources for native units are harder to reconcile, but about 14 regular Algerian and Tunisian Skirmisher battalions and 16 of Moroccans seem to have been deployed in northern Morocco, along with some 15 native cavalry squadrons from Spahi regiments (RSAs, RSTs & RSMs).

These were importantly supplemented by many semi-regular Moroccan *goums* (short-term volunteer units of roughly squadron size), as well as bands of irregular tribal *partisans* fighting in return for rifles and the chance to loot. The former were led by, and the latter to some extent coordinated by, French officers.

LEFT
On 12 June 1925, at Freydenberg Mobile Group's HQ at Gara de Mezziat, the French prime minister, Paul Painlevé, decorated the flag and 50 individual légionnaires of Maj Cazaban's VI/ 1st REI. This battalion had suffered about 25 per cent battle casualties since early May, including some 60 officers and men killed during a failed night sortie only 36 hours before this parade. The troops are wearing sand-khaki *képi*-covers and M1921 *tenue de toile,* with khaki wool puttees, brown boots and M1916 belt equipment – see Plate G1. (Photo12/ UIG via Getty Images)

he could never have held these cities in positional warfare, it was plausible that this would persuade northern tribes in the French zone to rise and join him, giving him an important advantage in any subsequent negotiations – the traditional pattern of Moroccan warfare.

BELOW LEFT
The French made considerable use of local '*partisans*', especially in winter 1925/26. Photographed earlier, in May 1925 near Ait Maatouf, these fighters (possibly of the Beni Ouarain) are clearly from the poorest class. The youngster reporting to a French intelligence officer carries an old single-shot 11mm Spanish M1871 Remington 'rolling block' rifle on a cord sling, and the bearded man (right) seems to have a satchel of woven wickerwork rather than leather. (Photo12/UIG via Getty Images)

OPPOSITE
French artillery in action, 4–6 June 1925, in the Taounate sector – by then, one of only two groups of posts still holding out north of the Ouergha. Beyond 'short 155mm' howitzers (foreground) are a field battery of M1897 '75s'. During the first few months of the French campaigns the difficulty of transporting sufficient ammunition across country between rapidly changing battlefields often limited the support that gunners could provide for the infantry. (Photo12/ UIG via Getty Images)

Shock attacks, April–May 1925

For lack of concrete or even much mortar, the French platoon posts north of the Oued Ouergha were constructed of mostly dry-stone walls and sandbags, within double belts of 'apron' and 'concertina' barbed wire. They had rudimentary internal buildings, water cisterns which had to be topped up from outside sources, and sometimes a linked external MG position to cover 'dead ground' or a water point.

Held by Colonial Infantry garrisons from the 1st Morocco Regt of Senegalese *Tirailleurs* or 'Skirmishers' (1st RTSM), the posts were grouped in company sectors. For example, that of 8th Co, II/ 1st RTSM consisted of no fewer than six posts spread across seven-plus miles and some two miles deep, commanded by three officers and three sergeants. The furthest north (see Map 2, detail) was Beni Derkoul; the others were Achirkane, Tafrant (Capt Pietri's

F

FRENCH *TROUPES COLONIALES & D'AFRIQUE*, 1925

(1) *Fusil-mitrailleur, 1er Régiment de Tirailleurs Sénégalais du Maroc*

During the post-1918 reductions African units of the *Troupes Coloniales* were widely redesignated, and those stationed in the colonies (as opposed to Europe) displayed no unit numbers with their yellow fouled-anchor badge. The 1st RTSM, whose platoons held outposts on the Oued Ouergha front, was a composite regiment (redesignated 5th RTS in 1926).

This 'skirmisher' wears the African troops' red *chéchia*, with the pre-1900 collarless 4-button *paletot de toile sans col* and *pantalon-culotte* trousers in sand-khaki linen. He displays the anchor on 'mustard-khaki' neck patches; yellow neck braid below a black edging; and a yellow 'scooped' chevron on the forearms (a badge of his branch rather than rank). The red waist sash was worn under the jacket when in action. His equipment is dictated by the fact that he carries his platoon's 8mm M1915 CSRG 'Chauchat' light machine gun. On his belt are a single canvas magazine pouch at right front, a tool wallet at left front, and at his right hip a Spanish 7.65mm Ruby semi-automatic pistol in an M1916 holster. In anticipation of a desperate action, he has slung on his left side an 8-magazine LMG haversack. He lacks the Y-straps of rifleman's belt equipment, and has laid aside his personal *musette* haversack, but would carry his water-bottle *(bidon)* at all times. (Composite after various sources, including Vauvillier & Deroo in *Militaria* No 54, and Bernard & Lachaux in No 297.)

(2) *Fusilier-grenadier, II / Régiment d'Infanterie Coloniale du Maroc, GM Freydenberg*

Colonel Barbasatt's three-battalion RICM – composed largely of 21-year-old French conscripts – was transferred from the Army of the Rhine in February 1925. The 2nd Bn reached Ain Aicha on the Ouergha front on 28 April, only to be heavily ambushed during a night march to Tissa on the 29th/ 30th. The 1st Bn held posts in the Teroual sector from May, while 2nd and 3rd Bns saw frequent action with GM Freydenberg. In late June and July the 2nd Bn was tested in hard fighting north of Ouezzane – where by late July they were 'thin and in rags', all companies were down to two platoons, and the battalion had only one captain and three lieutenants. In September all three battalions provided security in the Ain bou Aissa and Teroual sectors, and they were spared the autumn and spring offensives.

This private ('rifleman-grenadier') wears the cork sun-helmet also issued to Metropolitan troops; formerly termed the M1890, it is now identified as a late-production M1886. The Colonial and African troops' mustard-khaki woollen M1915 or virtually identical M1920 greatcoat is worn over the sand-khaki linen M1921 rankers' *tenue de toile* (see under Plates F3 & G1), both with M1917 collar patches bearing two upper-edge pipings *(soutaches)* and the Colonials' anchor in *garance* red. Field marching order (see F3) is based on M1916 belt equipment, and his rifle is the 8mm M1886/ 93 Lebel. (Composite, after Bouchery, Lachaux & Vauvillier in *Militaria* No 88; Bernard & Lachaud, No 297; and Contamine, No 372.)

(3) *Tirailleur, 19e Bataillon de Marche de Tirailleurs Algériens; GM Colombat*

After 1918 the Algerian/ Tunisian and Moroccan 'marching regiments of Skirmishers' formed in World War I were broken up into regiments and some independent battalions. Major Stephani's 19th BMTA took 125 casualties during the re-supply of Bibane on 25 May. By 8 June it had lost about 70 per cent killed, wounded or missing, and was later disbanded.

In May–August 1925, exhausting forced marches were as much of an ordeal for the Mobile Groups as combat itself, and this Algerian Berber rifleman illustrates field marching order. Many tirailleurs in the field wore a pale khaki turban loosely wound around the unbadged *chéchia,* but this *'turco'* does not. His uniform is the rankers' sand-khaki *tenue de toile modèle 1921,* of which the *pantalon-culotte* actually dated from 1915. The orders of 31 March 1921 prescribed a linen tunic following the cut of the mustard-khaki woollen *vareuse de drap* of 10 July 1920. On the spread fall collar (but obscured at this angle), the mustard-khaki M1917 collar patches of North African infantry bore two *soutaches* and the unit number in bright blue branch-colour. In field order the M1916 belt equipment was worn with the slung 2-litre, two-spout M1877 *bidon* and the *musette* haversack. Marching order added an M1893/ 14 canvas knapsack; attached externally are a khaki-painted *gamelle* messtin; a folded tent-cloth, blanket and spare tunic; spare boots; and, as part of the squad's bivouac gear, a collapsible canvas bucket (other men would carry 10-litre water cans, cooking pans, tools, etc. on their packs). The 8mm five-shot M1907/ 15 Berthier rifle was often issued instead of the Lebel. (Composite, mainly after Catteau & Vauvillier in *Militaria* No 129.)

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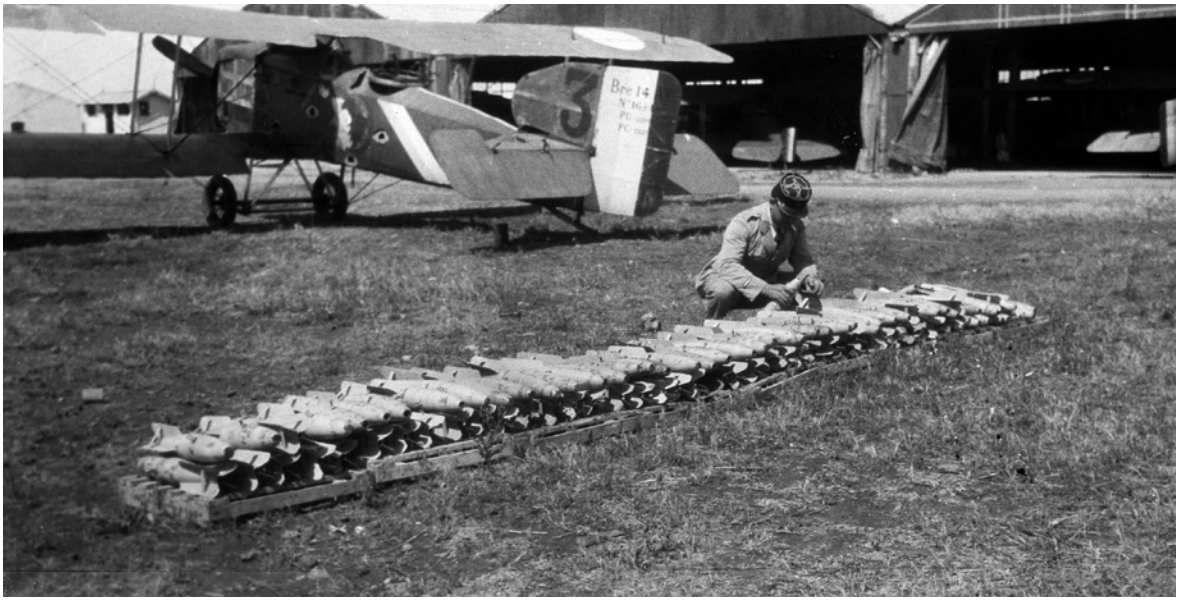


By far the most numerous type used by the French *Aviation Militaire* was the Breguet 14A2; this aircraft was photographed at Fes, with a subaltern or warrant officer inspecting 10kg anti-personnel bombs stacked ready for loading. By mid-June 1925 the 37e RAO's strength on the northern fighting front had been reinforced from 10 to 18 squadrons, deployed in Western, Central and Eastern tactical commands. Their original units' squadron insignia were not changed. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

OPPOSITE
A French NCO air mechanic posing with a Breguet 14T*bis* variant, which could evacuate two casualties lying on the floor of the heightened forward fuselage – note the added windows. The first of these innovative *'limousines'* arrived for the 37e RAO in 1922, two being dispersed to each of its then-10 *escadrilles*. After the outbreak of war, in May 1925 monthly air 'medevacs' to rear hospitals increased to 278, and by the end of that year they totalled 987. Some Hanriot HD 14s were also modified, but these could carry only one casualty. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

company HQ), Aoudour, Dar Remich, and the dominating hill of Bibane. Beni Derkoul's garrison was typical: the 21-year-old S/Lt Pol Lapeyre had a French sergeant and two gunners, two West African NCOs and 34 rankers, with a single 75mm gun for mutual support between neighbouring posts, two Hotchkiss MGs, at least one M1915 'Chauchat' LMG, Lebel or Berthier rifles, and rifle- and hand-grenades.

* * *

On the night of 12/13 April 1925, Abd el Krim launched advances south across a discontinuous front of about 75 miles. On the middle Ouergha, strong regular detachments headed the first 4,000-strong wave of Djibala warriors, Senadja Srir and Beni Mestara; these were followed by a second wave of roughly equal strength. The Rifians raced south into Beni Zeroual country along three separate routes, killing tribesmen and burning villages but at first maintaining momentum by bypassing French posts. To the east, two other strong harkas of Ait Waryaghar/ Beni Urriaguel and Gzinnaya/ Gueznaya began pushing south towards the Kifane group of posts, NE of the strategic city of Taza on the eastwards route to Oujda and the Algerian frontier.

The clans north of the Ouergha all collapsed within a couple of days, sending refugees fleeing south. Those that submitted had to provide hostages; their chiefs were replaced or supervised, and they were taxed for Abd el Krim's war chest and conscripted for his levies. Meanwhile, groups of regulars were digging in around the French north-bank outposts. They kept up heavy fire on the defenders; some dug approach trenches to within 50 yards, and mounted assaults; and some had Spanish artillery pieces. Soon all the garrisons were taking increasing casualties, and appealing for reinforcement and resupply, casualty evacuation, and – in temperatures rising to 54° C (130° F) – for water, which could only be provided by aircraft dropping sacks of ice-blocks.

Throwing a pontoon bridge across the Ouergha, Lyautey scrambled his limited forces together for attempts to relieve the north-bank posts. The first reinforcements from Algeria and Tunisia were two African Colonial

French air power

The command echelon for all French aviation in Morocco was Col Armengaud's 37th Air Observation Regt (37e RAO), headquartered in Rabat. In April 1925 this had 10 squadrons (*escadrilles*), each of 8–12 Breguet 14A2 single-engine, two-seat biplanes: six squadrons along the northern front Fes – Ouezzane – Taza – Guercif, and the other four further south. Between 30 April and mid-June these were reinforced with six squadrons from 36e RAO in Algeria and Tunisia, and two specialist bomber units of 11e RAB from Metz, France. Early summer saw two of the southern reserve squadrons brought north, taking strength on the Rif front to some 190 machines, of which about 120 were operational at any one time. Their sortie rate was high, with some crews flying up to an astonishing eight missions in 24 hours. Attacks were usually made from dangerous 300–600ft altitudes, and ground commanders praised the Breguet crews' close support.

Two more squadrons, from 32e RAO in France, arrived during Pétain's build-up in September, when nine 'sector' squadrons were put at the disposal of front-line ground commanders, with another nine in 'strategic reserve' at the C-in-C's disposal. Peak strength in November–December was 22 squadrons; of these, one was a mercenary unit (see below), and the 37e RAO's 22e Esc was actually a six-plane *flotille* of Farman F60 Goliath twin-engine heavy bombers from the Aéronavale. (Untrained for low-level flying in 'hot and high' mountainous terrain, they lacked many targets for long-range 'strategic' missions.) From mid-October 1925 bad weather often reduced air operations, and in January 1926 the six 36e RAO reinforcement squadrons were withdrawn.

The **'Second Lafayette Escadrille'** was the press's nickname for an American volunteer squadron raised during May–August 1925 at Ouezzane by Col Charles Sweeney, at a time when the demand for French aircrew led to many reservists being mobilized. With mercenary aircrew and French groundcrew for its Breguets, this squadron had an ambiguous character: officially part of the Sultan of Morocco's *Garde Chérifienne*, it was numbered 19e Esc in 37e RAO, but operated over both French and Spanish zones. There was international criticism of its bombing of civilian targets in the latter during September 1925, and it was disbanded in November.

battalions, II/ 15th RTC and I/ 10th RTC, which were fed into the outpost line late in April. These, and the three-battalion RICM, were among 19 infantry units that Lyautey gave to Gen Chambrun for his northern front, of which the other 14, all Colonial or Africa Army (see page 40), formed an inadequate mobile reserve. On 25 April this was divided between three Mobile Groups (GMs): those of Gen Arthaud Colombat in the west, Col Henry Freydenberg in the centre, and Gen Albert Cambay in the east. Their relative strengths would vary, but in late May, for example, GM Freydenberg would have VI/ 1st REI, II/ RICM, one Moroccan and two Algerian Tirailleur battalions, and an *ad hoc* mixed battalion of Zouaves and Senegalese.

Central and western fronts, May–July 1925

The GMs were constantly on the march, often outpacing their logistics and any available artillery, as they fought one urgent action after another to resupply or extract dwindling Colonial garrisons. There was no defined front line: while units fought to save one garrison north of the Ouergha, other posts miles to the south might already have fallen, or been destroyed

The pivotal moment in the French conduct of the war: on 17 July 1925, Marshal Hubert Lyautey (left) greets Marshal Philippe Pétain on his arrival in Morocco by air. Lyautey had already been stripped of military command on 6 July; humiliated by his demotion to civil high commissioner, he would resign that post on 24 September. (Photo12/ UIG via Getty Images)

OPPOSITE LEFT
Lyautey's military replacement was Gen Stanislas Naulin, who accepted the apparently 'poisoned chalice' of consolidating the front line, and deploying the new reinforcements, in the ten weeks remaining before the autumn rains. His M1913 tunic shows the British-style pockets popular during World War I, and seven gold left-sleeve chevrons marking his four years at the front during 1914–18. (Courtesy of Cody Images).

and abandoned as indefensible. For example, on 30 May, while other units of GM Freydenberg were busy on the north bank around Tafrant, some 33 miles to the SE the mauled II/ 1st RTSM platoon holding Ait Maatouf east of Ain Aicha had to be withdrawn (see Map 2, detail). Since Freydenberg Group's HQ had left Ain Aicha for Gara de Mezziat to its north, the former was itself then considered dangerously exposed, and the French conscripts of II/ RICM, newly arrived there, were ordered south to Tissa. Their night march ran into a heavy ambush, costing them 42 casualties.

After sparse artillery preparation, légionnaires and tirailleurs often suffered significant losses during successive relief attacks up the same hills, fighting their way through double rings of Rifian trenches with machine guns facing inwards and outwards. For instance, a resupply of Bibane on 25 May, by the Legion's II/ 1st and part of II/ 2nd REI, the 19th Algerian Marching Bn and a West African unit, cost GM Colombat about 100 killed and 300 wounded (see commentaries to Plates F3 & G1).

The Colonial garrisons often showed heroic endurance; always short of water and food, and often under shellfire, they drove back repeated assaults, and sortied to raid the attackers' trenches. A few garrisons were ordered to break out by night, and handfuls of men did sometimes manage to trick their attackers and reach temporary safety. When all hope was gone, others – determined not to be taken alive – chose a quick death by blowing up ammunition magazines (reportedly, the Berbers treated black prisoners with particular cruelty). Sergeant Bernez-Cambot's garrison on Bibane would fight to the last man when that post finally fell on 5 June, after 11 consecutive days of bombardment by two guns firing 30–40 shells a day.

Lyautey still stubbornly ignored the Spanish authorities north of the now operationally meaningless zonal border, but on 14 May Prime Minister Painlevé sent envoys to Madrid to negotiate cooperation. On 25 May, Gen Albert Daugan took over from Chambrun as GOC northern front, with Gen Gaston Bilotte as his chief of staff. General Colombat was then obliged to react to a new threat towards Fes by Ahmed Heriro's Djibala rebels, and on 29 May – four days after their ordeal at Bibane – II/ 1st REI began an exhausting forced march 60 straight-line miles NW all the way to Ouezzane.

Colombat's partial shift westwards, and the abandonment of more posts north of the river, prompted a new Rifian thrust on the central Ouergha. The loss of Astar post on the north bank on 2 June unbalanced the French line west of Taounate. Astar's brief recapture on 4–5 June, undertaken to protect other movements, suffered from bad GM Freydenberg staff work, and Maj Cazaban's VI/ 1st REI suffered 71 casualties. A failed night sortie from Gara de Mezziat to rescue Mediouna airfield's garrison on 10/11 June

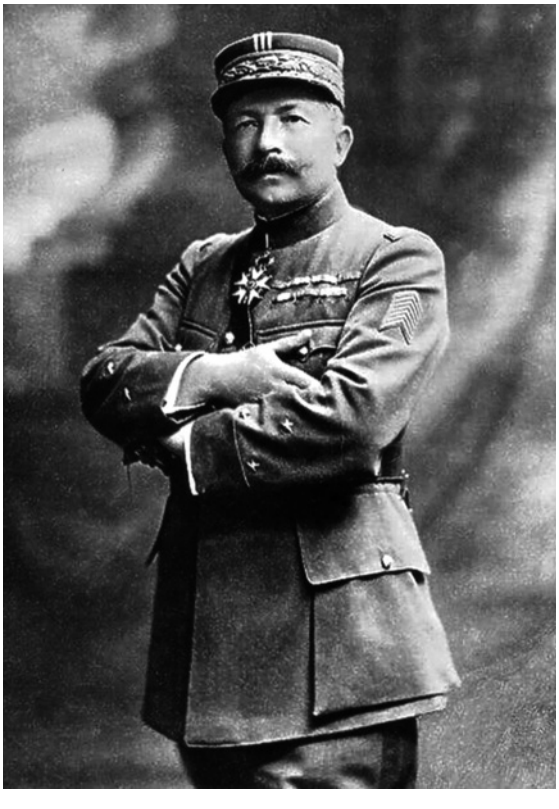
cost Cazaban another 60 officers and men killed outright, bringing his unit's cumulative casualties since 4 May to nearly 200.

While Lyautey's shortage of troops made them unavoidable, such operations by his *ad hoc* columns had only patchy success, and new rebels were still joining Abd el Krim in large numbers. By 10 June the only posts holding out on the north bank were Ain bou Aissa, Beni Derkoul, Tafrant and Taounate, while north of Ouezzane GM Colombat were simultaneously hard pressed to sustain those along the Loukos river and the zonal border. However, on 17 June French and Spanish troops met up for the first time near Rihana border post, and thereafter the two armies would begin to undertake if not joint, then at least mutually informed operations.

By the end of June, 43 of the 66 original posts north of the Ouergha had fallen or been abandoned – with a total estimated loss of some 5,000 rifles and 200 automatic weapons, 35 mortars, 51 artillery pieces, 17,000 shells and mortar bombs and 60,000 grenades, in addition to small-arms ammunition. (The French made only modest use of Stokes-type mortars, being short of ammunition for them.) Fighting went on around Tafrant and Taounate during July; Ain Aicha was only definitively relieved on the 20th, and on the 30th Ain bou Aissa was the last north-bank post to fall, when a Rifian shell hit its magazine. While Fes now seemed to be safe, individual Rifian attacks continued both north and south of the Ouergha.

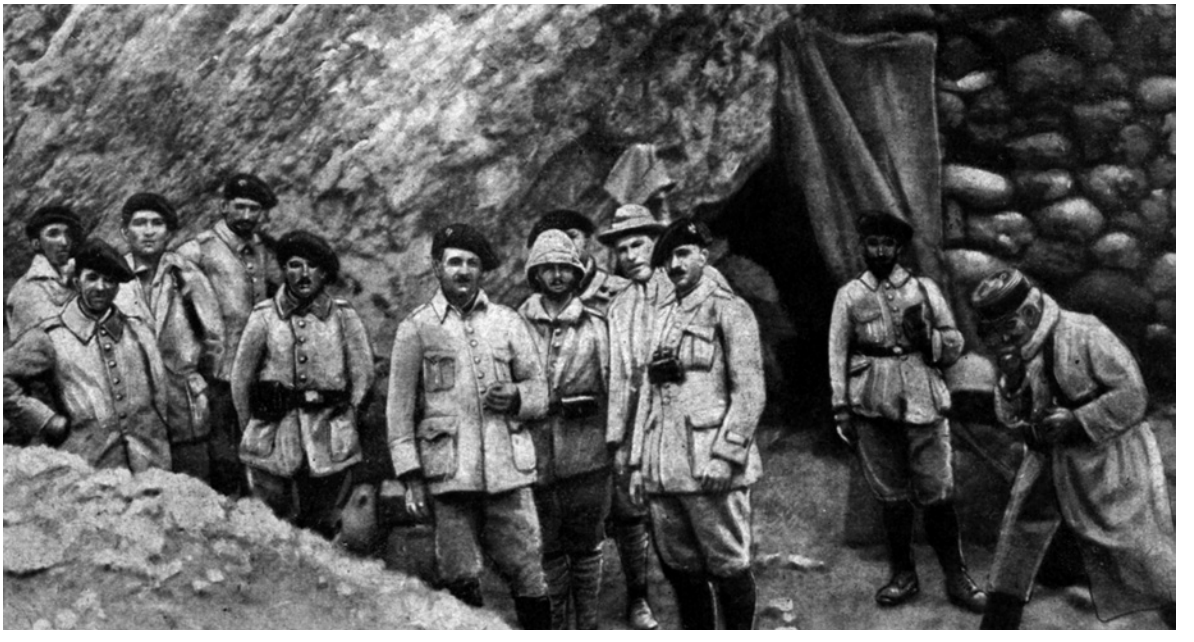
Eastern front, June–July 1925

In June the most serious threat was in fact posed by some 4,000 Ait Waryaghar and Gzinnaya, under Abd el Krim's eastern regional general Haddu n'Muh Amyzzan. These were active around the Kifane group of posts, only about



BELOW
26 August 1925: two tribal emissaries come in to seek surrender terms from Gen Boichut (left), commander of Pétain's eastern corps based on Taza.

One reason that Abd el Krim's alliance unravelled when his early successes ceased was the absence of racial solidarity. When a Moroccan clan were defeated, whether by fellow Muslims or Europeans, they routinely sought terms, and since the French were careful to show respect for Islam, clans might change sides to fight alongside them. (Photo12/UIG via Getty Images)



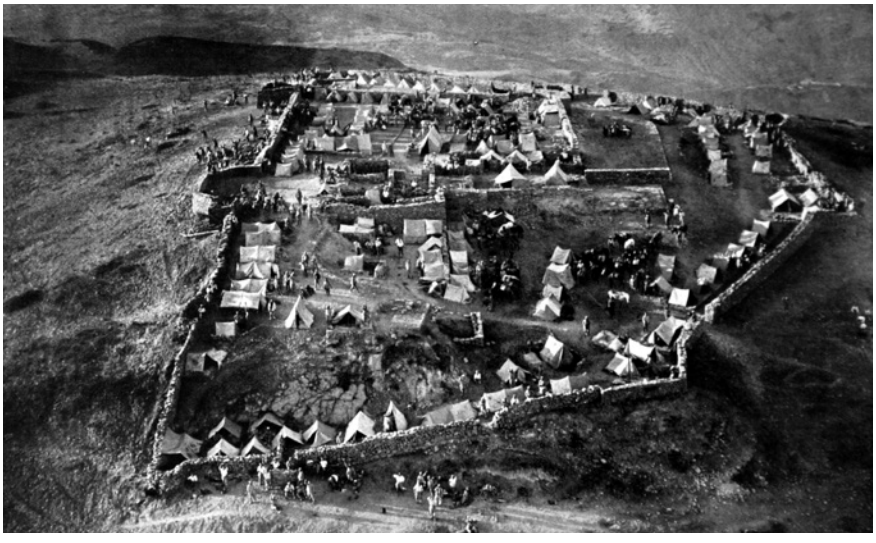
The authors have been unable to identify all of the relatively few Metropolitan infantry units sent to Morocco during Pétain's build-up, but they included the 15th, 23rd–25th & 27th Bns of Alpine Chasseurs (BCAs). These troops are identified as *Chasseurs Alpins* by their large dark blue berets. Their uniforms are mixed: several wear M1915 *tenue de toile* without breast pockets, but modified with turn-down collars. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

20 miles north of the road and rail links with Algeria through Taza. In this sector the rebels were faced by the relatively weak GM Cambay built around LtCol Giraud's 14th RTA, though importantly backed by Spahis, and by semi-regular tribal *goumiers* led by officers such as the renowned Lt Henri de Bournazel (see Plate H3). The Rifians' aim here was to inflame the previously submitted Tsouls and Branès tribes. If rebels could dominate the Beni Bou Yahi country around the Oued Msoun, and get south across the highway, they might cut access from Algeria – and, conceivably, even link up with the still unconquered 'Taza Pocket' further south (see Map 1, 'Tache de Taza').

They made considerable progress west of Taza, tearing up the railway tracks, and during a crisis of 23–27 June Gen Cambay actually suggested abandoning Taza and withdrawing eastwards. Lyautey dismissed this strategically perilous idea, and Gen Bilotte juggled units to fight along the Oued Leben, which linked the central and eastern fronts. By 7 July the Beni Bou Yahi had been defeated, and during July–September reinforcements including five more Legion battalions would arrive from the Atlas front. However, these were dwarfed during August by elements of the newly disembarked Moroccan and 11th Divs (see below), which soon neutralized the threat in this sector.

ENTER PÉTAIN, JULY–AUGUST 1925

French troops in Morocco still totalled only about 60,000, and, embarrassed by repeated failures and mounting casualties, Paris had lost faith in Lyautey's pre-1914 tactics. On 6 July the War Ministry informed him of the imminent arrival of the whole Moroccan Div from the Rhineland occupation army – but also that, while remaining the political high commissioner, he should now pass his military duties over to Gen Stanislas Naulin. During 15–30 July, Marshal Philippe Pétain (vice-chairman of the Supreme War Council, and professional head of the French Army) undertook a searching personal inspection, and Paris would quickly give him what he demanded for his 're-articulation of our order of battle'.



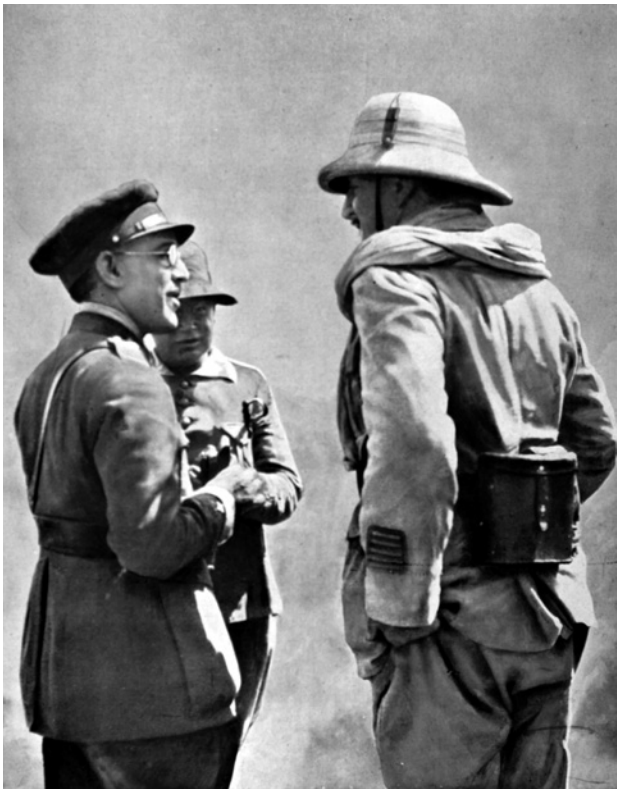
Aerial photo of the large French fort on the Djebel Amseft in Tsouls tribal territory north of Taza, which was re-occupied on 26 August 1925 by troops of the newly arrived Moroccan Division. There are relatively few interior buildings, but plentiful space for tents and pack-mules. The general outline roughly resembles that of the much smaller outposts on the Ouergha front. (Photo12/ UIG via Getty Images)

Crucially, Pétain was determined that this war would no longer be fought by *ad hoc* colonial columns, but by complete divisions with a conventional chain of command, equipped with all the tools of 1918, and in planned cooperation with the Spanish. The first fruits of Pétain's meetings with Primo de Rivera came during 2–18 August, when Spanish fire supported Freydenberg's operations north from Ouezzane to clear Djibala rebels from heights above the river Loukos. Here French Renault FT-17 tanks were deployed for the first time, and on 14 August Freydenberg's troops linked up successfully with those of the Spanish Gen Riquelme.

Reinforcement and 're-articulation'

Pétain returned to Morocco on 18 August to exercise supreme military command. By the end of that month the first 14 of an eventual 36 fresh

The use of M1886 sun-helmets identifies this battery of '75s' in action as Metropolitan Army reinforcements, most of whom were support and service troops rather than infantry. Despite the hydraulic recoil system for which this rapid-fire M1897 field gun was famous, note that a shallow pit has still been dug behind it for the trail. (Courtesy of Cody Images)



August 1925: the Spanish Gen José Riquelme (left) confers with the French Col Henry Freydenberg, commander of the formerly central Mobile Group. Both were then fighting Ahmed Heriro's forces in the region north of Ouezzane, where garrisons and relief columns close to the Spanish/French zonal border were under extreme pressure. Freydenberg's British Wolseley sun-helmet is a personal choice (Photo12/ UIG via Getty Images)

battalions and many Metropolitan support units had arrived, and by mid-September French forces in Morocco totalled 120,000 on Gen Naulin's northern front and 35,000 elsewhere. Naulin's forces were deployed as follows (note that the *divisions de marche* pragmatically mixed Colonial, Africa Army and some Metropolitan units according to need and availability):

Western sector (Gen Pruneau, GOC 35th Div), Ouezzane:
128th Div (255th & 256th Bdes, each 2 regts = 6 bns); *35th Div* (69th & 70th Bdes); 2x cav sqns; 2x tank squadrons.

Central sector (Gen Marty, GOC Moroccan Div), Fes:
2nd Marching Div (3rd & 4th Bdes); *3rd Marching Div* (5th & 6th Bdes); Spahi regt; tank sqn; reserve, *Moroccan Div* (7th & 8th Brigades).

Eastern sector (Gen Boichut, GOC XIX Army Corps), Taza:
11th Div (21st & 22nd Bdes); *1st Marching Div* (1st & 2nd Bdes); 1st Spahi Bde; tank squadron.

The fresh infantry from the Army of the Rhine were very largely Colonial and Africa Army units; only perhaps a dozen Metropolitan French infantry battalions were sent (sources differ), and those seem to have been held in reserve. Divisions had been completely reconstituted since 1918; they were weaker in cavalry and artillery, but after arrival some had incorporated a few of Lyautey's veteran units. For instance, Gen Herault's **128th Div** now comprised European, Moroccan, Algerian and Colonial Senegalese units: 1st RZ (2x bns); 3rd Bat d'Af; 65th RTM (3x bns); 12th RTS (3x bns); 9th RSA (2x sqns); and 5x field batteries. Meanwhile, Gen Marty's **Moroccan Div** consisted of: 2nd REI, 2nd RZ (each 2x bns); 4th Bat d'Af; 14th RTA, 64th RTM (each 2x bns); 4th REI (1x, later 2x bns); 5th RSA (2x sqns); and 5x field batteries.

COORDINATED OPERATIONS, SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 1925

Planning

Pétain and the Spanish Gen Sanjurjo intended to push deep into the Rifian heartland until winter prevented further movement. In this campaign the Rifians would not only be heavily outnumbered and outgunned, but would to some extent suffer from trying to copy their enemies' tactics. Alongside their always-effective mobile guerrilla methods, they had constructed some entrenched defensive positions on European lines, which in 1925–26 would make them more vulnerable to European artillery and air support.

The Spanish had long been planning and rehearsing an ambitious landing operation at Alhucemas Bay. French staff officers, at first dubious, later

A Rifian *caid* named as Sarkash (left) and his son posing with their weapons – respectively, a French Berthier M1916 carbine and a Spanish M1893 rifle. Few photos show tribesmen wearing waist belts or sashes over the *chilaba*, but note (right) this highly decorated example. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

recognized that these preparations demonstrated a new Spanish competence. The landings, commanded by Gen Sanjurjo, were to be made by *c.*17,000 troops from Ceuta and Melilla, in 63 transport ships with British-supplied landing barges, plus prefabricated floating docks. They would be supported by 32 Spanish and 18 French warships, some 90 land-based aircraft and 18 seaplanes. In addition to strong divisional artillery, the combat units would be as follows:

Ceuta Bde (Gen Saro y Marin):

Tercio: 6th & 7th Banderas. *Regulares:* Grupo No 1 de Tetuán.

Although the French pioneered the use of specialist medical-evacuation aircraft, getting the wounded back from the front line to a practical airstrip was still a slow, difficult and agonizing process. Here a North African *tirailleur* leads a pack-mule with a *cacolet* saddle, providing a seat for a casualty on each side. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

Cazadores Bns; Nos 3 Arapiles, 5 Segorbe, 8 Tarifa.
Mehalas: Tetuán & Larache (each *c*.600 men). *Harka*: Col Muñoz Grandes (Melilla, 900 men).
Artillery: 2x 75mm batteries, 1x 105mm bty. *Tank sqn* (Renault FT-17s).
Melilla Bde (Gen Fernández Pérez):
Tercio: 2nd & 3rd Banderas. *Regulares:* Grupo No 2 de Melilla.
Marine Inf Bn; Cazadores Bn No 16 Africa; II/ Line Inf Regt No 68 Africa, I/ Line Inf Regt No 59 Melilla.
Mehala Melilla. *Harka* Col Varela (each 600–750 men).
Arty: 1x 75mm bty, 1x 105mm battery.

G FRENCH *TROUPES D'AFRIQUE & AVIATION MILITAIRE*, 1925–26

(1) *Sergent, II/ 1er Régiment Étranger d'Infanterie; GM Colombat*, 1925

On 25 May 1925 some 2,000 men of one Algerian, one Senegalese, and one-and-a-half Legion battalions attacked the large hill of Bibane to re-supply the Senegalese platoon holding the post on the summit. Rebels held the rocky, overgrown slopes in strength; they had loop-holed village houses, dug trenches facing both inwards and outwards, and built stone 'nests' for machine guns providing crossfire. The French artillery's inadequate barrage fell partly on the Algerian 19th BMTA in the first line (see under Plate F3). When Maj Deslandes' II/ 1st REI were brought up to bypass them, their repeated attacks were all checked by enemy fire. Finally, Deslandes summoned his remaining seven officers; carrying a haversack of grenades, he told them to do the same, and to follow him in a 1918-style trench charge. At the whistle, they broke cover; their légionnaires leapt forwards behind them, and eventually the unit broke through, at the cost of 60 casualties.[3]

This sergeant – note the single short diagonal gold-lace 'campaign' bar on his forearms – carries F1 grenades in a standard-issue *musette* (it seems unlikely that the complex M1917 *musette speciale pour grenades* would have been widely available). The Legion had replaced rankers' *képis* with a khaki *bonnet de police* in 1915. *Képis* of 1914–15 manufacture (height 115mm rear, 80mm front) in plain *bleu clair* or khaki (and, for re-engaged NCOs, in pre-war colours) began to reappear from 1920, all with sand-khaki field covers. This uniform is the rankers' M1921 *vareuse de toile* and M1915 *pantalon-culotte*. The khaki M1917 collar patches show the Legion's two green *soutaches* and the *grenade à sept flammes*. The buttons are of pale brass *'tombac'* alloy; the patch breast pockets in this case have hemmed open tops (some had pointed flaps), and the waist pockets rectangular flaps. Note the captured Mauser bayonet in his belt; this was preferred over the flimsy Lebel needle-bayonet for hand-to-hand combat. (Composite after various sources, including Catteau & Vauvillier in *Militaria* No 129, and Chapelle in No 173.)

3 On 18 July, near Bab Hoceine south-east of Ouezzane, Maj Marcel Deslandes – a commissioned former Line Infantry sergeant – would be mortally wounded while again leading his men in a successful up-hill assault.

(2) *Lieutenant navigant, 37e Régiment d'Aviation d'Observation*, 1925

The 37th RAO's Breguet 14A-2 biplanes undertook the whole range of combat missions, from reconnaissance and aerial photography, to ground support with MGs and 10kg bombs. This aircrew *(navigant)* officer wears the Army's 1919 *'polo'* model of the commissioned and warrant officers' *képi*. For the Aviation Militaire it was entirely black, with gold trim: a narrow quatrefoil knot and 'circumference' piping on the countersunk top; for this rank, double *soutaches* around the rim, and over it at front, back and sides; a gold lace false chinstrap with slides and gilt buttons; and, for aircrew, the *épervier* (sparrowhawk) frontal badge, here beneath the regimental number. Over flying overalls this pilot wears a double-breasted leather coat and gauntlets; in his left hand he carries his flying helmet, goggles and mapcase, and is armed with an M1892 revolver in a hard-shell *'jambon'* ('leg of ham') holster. (After Chapelle, *Militaria* No 173.)

(3) *Lieutenant, 2e Régiment de Zouaves; Division Marocaine, Groupement Taza*, 1926

The Morocco veteran Gen Pierre Ibos's division arrived during August 1925, and went into action in September. In May 1926 its infantry comprised 3 battalions of the Legion, 2 of Zouaves, 2 of Algerian and 2 of Moroccan Tirailleurs, plus one 'Bat d'Af'.

Officers enjoyed latitude in their barracks and campaign dress; some anticipated regulations by adopting the latest fashionable details, while retaining older patterns for field use. However, this Zouave platoon commander wears officers' regulation 1920 *tenue de toile*. The dark blue patches on the closed stand-and-fall 'Saxe' collar display the Zouaves' double red *soutaches* and, in gold, the regimental number above a crescent (the last being non-regulation, but tolerated). Two short gold lace bars just above each cuff identify his rank. Officers of entitled regiments often wore in the field *fourragères* (collective unit award lanyards); this elaborate example, with 'floating' *tours-de-bras*, is in the red-flecked green of the Croix de Guerre ribbon, marking three citations in Army orders during 1915–18. Officers might wear either leather leggings or puttees with ankle boots. The campaign cover of the M1919 *képi* has a cut-out exposing part of the rank *soutaches* and the unit identity. Other personal choices are sunglasses, and a traditional *chèche* desert scarf. Sabres were not carried in the field, but walking sticks typically were. His *ceinturon à baudrier* ('Sam Browne') and several slings support his M1892 revolver holster and other field equipment: a binocular case, and, hidden behind him, a mapcase, *bidon*, and perhaps a *musette*. (After Dagnicourt, *Militaria* No 127.)

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Kudia Tahar

Signs of preparation in both Comandancias had warned the Abd el Krims, and in the west M'hamed sent Ahmed Heriro to launch a diversion. Some 4,000 men with nine 75mm and 105mm guns moved across country to the important company post of Kudia Tahar, in a salient of the Estella Line south of Tetuán. Heriro placed blocking forces to command all routes from that city, and installed his guns on a dominating height. On 3 September he opened an accurate bombardment, followed by infantry assaults with strong MG support.

The original garrison were 130 men under Capt Goméz Zaracibar of Line Inf Regt No 5 Infante, plus artillery Lt Ángel Mejón with 23 men serving four 70mm guns. The first day's shellfire devastated the post's defences, knocked out three guns, and killed two officers and 15 rankers. Reinforcement was immediately attempted from the west, by two companies of Cazadores Bn No 6 Africa and 21 artillerymen led by Lt Fuentes Pila, but only Pila and 11 of his men got through the inevitable ambushes, while of 40 sappers also sent with Lt Sevillano Cousillas only 26 arrived. On 4 September, 500 Regulares failed to break through; the last gun was put out of action, shells destroyed the water drums, and the effective defenders were reduced to 48 men. On 5 September, Capt Goméz was killed and command passed to the wounded Lt Sevillano. Further relief attempts by Regulares and Line troops during 6–9 September all failed, and the defenders were reduced to drinking the urine of ration cows.

Frustrated, Primo de Rivera then ordered the temporary detachment of three elite battalions – 2nd & 3rd Banderas of the Tercio, and II Tabor from Regulares Grupo No 2 – from the waiting Melilla landing brigade. Remarkably, both he and Gen Sanjurjo accompanied them to Tetuán, and on 11 September these units spearheaded a thrust from the north by LtCol Amado Balmes. Fighting their way through fierce resistance, they finally relieved Kudia Tahar on the 12th – by which date the surviving defenders numbered 34, only 12 of them unwounded.

1925: French infantry wearing pale khaki *chéchia*-covers – so probably *Zouaves* – pass a crash-landed Breguet 14A2, which they may be ordered to destroy to prevent its capture. Aerial attacks were made from only a few hundred feet altitude, so MG and concentrated small-arms fire from the ground was dangerous. It is estimated that during the course of the campaign some 40 French aircrew were killed, or roughly 14 per cent of the total deployed. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

The Alhucemas landings

On 8 September, following naval bombardments, the Ceuta Bde began landing on Cebadilla beach outside the bay's western headland. The first wave was led by Col Franco with the Tercio's 6th Bandera, flanked on their right by Muñoz Grandes' *harquenos*. Franco then struck eastwards to take the headland and three Rifian guns, while Muñoz Grandes covered the west and began to push inland. Successive landings extended the beachhead, and by nightfall Gen Saro was ashore with some 8,000 men and three batteries, at a cost of 103 casualties. On 9 September the tanks were landed, and the brigade's artillery began to counter Rifian guns. On the 10th, no fewer than nine more 105mm and 155mm batteries of divisional artillery were landed on an island in the centre of the bay. Apart from artillery duels, something of a stalemate then ensued in the absence of Gen Sanjurjo. Bad weather delayed until 11 September the first landings at Cebadilla of the weakened Melilla Bde, and that night the Rifians counter-attacked. From 13 September Spanish artillery and aircraft increased their efforts (including mustard-gas bombs) against Rifian guns concealed in caves and gulleys.

Primo de Rivera and Sanjurjo arrived only on the 19th; by the next day some 15,000 troops were ashore, but on the 22nd an attempted advance was driven back. What became a three-week campaign would subject the landing force to a gruelling advance against strong resistance, in rocky terrain studded with defended heights, entrenchments, and even minefields. However, on 23 September the Melilla Bde on the left flank reached the western shore of the bay itself, while the Ceuta Bde attacked a major Rifian position on the heights of Malmusi Alto. In both brigades the Tercio and Regulares led the assaults and took their objectives, but that day alone cost some 700 Spanish casualties.

Near Msila north of Taza, at the beginning of Pétain's September 1925 offensive, two French officers ascend in the basket of a tethered observation balloon. (ullstein-bild via Getty Images)

For the next attacks, on the heights of Las Palomas and Tramara, Gen Sanjurjo broke the brigades up into infantry columns each with integral sapper and artillery support. On the right (west), Ceuta Bde's 1st & 2nd Columns (Cols Franco & Martin) were spearheaded by the Tercio, Regulares and Cazadores, and the 3rd (LtCol Losada) by Cazadores, each backed by auxiliaries. The Melilla Bde on the left (east) formed two columns: the 1st (Col Goded) had two Banderas, a mehala and a harka, and the 2nd (Col Vera) Melilla Regulares Grupo No 3 and II/ Line Inf Regt No 68. Aircraft located many Rifian gun positions, and on 30 September, after artillery and air preparation, Franco's column led the Ceuta Bde forwards in the west, with Col Losada on his right and Col Martin in reserve. The Melilla Bde to the east was led by Col Goded, with Col Vera

on his left. Under rotating air cover, and with tank support, the heights were taken.

On the eastern flank on the morning of 1 October, Col Goded's leading troops crossed from Bocoya into Beni Urriagel tribal territory; later counter-attacks were driven off, and the line was consolidated. The next day Goded's and Varela's men occupied Abd el Krim's deserted capital at Axdir, and burned it down. The campaign had cost Spain 361 soldiers killed and 1,875 wounded, but Gen Sanjurjo's division had demonstrated a transformational improvement, and their victory was greatly celebrated and rewarded.

French counter-offensive

On 10 September, as soon as Sanjurjo's beachhead was secure, Pétain launched his own offensive across the western and central Ouergha, with strong artillery and air support. Most Rifians were fighting the Spanish, and after brief resistance those remaining on the Ouergha fell back everywhere. On 27 September Gen Boichut's right wing was committed to the final phase, aiming to advance NE from around Kifane as far as the river Kert, to meet a Spanish force under Gen Gonzáles Carrasco advancing from the east. On 8 October French and Spanish patrols did meet up on the Kert, at Souk el Tleta, but then two weeks of appalling weather – and the failure of the French Spahi Bde, at Sidi Ali bou Rekbar on the 11th – prevented a solid conjunction. General Boichut pulled back to Es Sebt, and built a line of posts facing the Djebel Rekbaba and extending west along the Djebel Nador.

There, most of the French infantry would spend a wretched winter, with many casualties from disease and exposure. Most active operations between November 1925 and March 1926 fell to *goumiers* and *partisans* armed by the French and receiving some air support. Their several successes served to detach increasing numbers of clans from Abd el Krim's alliance. On the western front, major Spanish forces had pushed SE to the river Loukos by 15 March.

In December 1925 the French government finally released its casualty figures for the period 15 April–15 October 1925. These totalled 11,419 of all ranks: 2,640 killed, 7,569 wounded severely enough to be evacuated to the rear, and 1,220 missing in action. Of the last, only 158 would survive.

THE FINAL OFFENSIVE, MAY 1926

Planning and forces

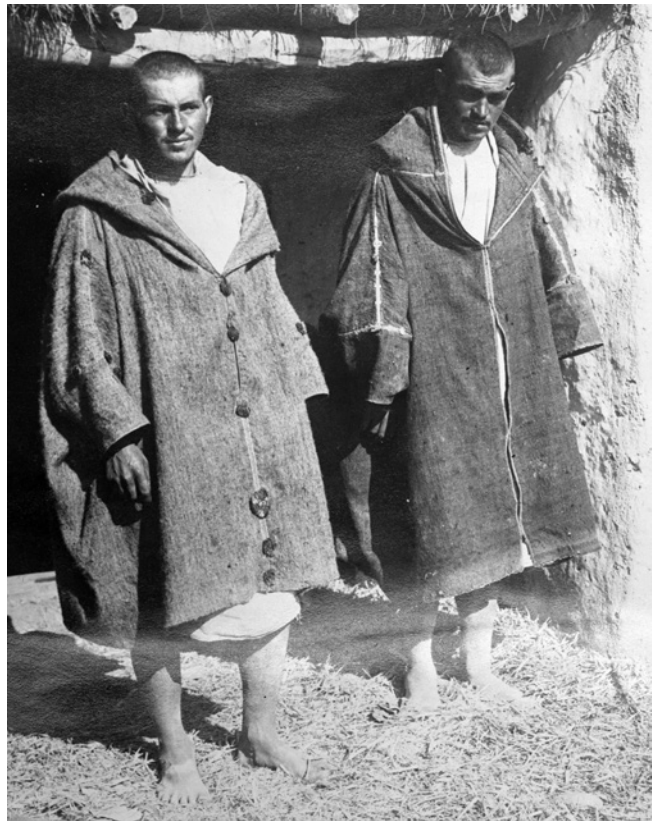
Faced by an inevitable joint spring offensive, Abd el Krim offered to negotiate, and both Spain and France agreed to do so. The talks finally began at Oujda on 27 April 1926, but broke down on 6 May, mainly over Abd el Krim's unshakable demand for independence from the Sultanate. French and Spanish orders went out immediately; with perhaps 40,000 French and 52,000 Spanish troops concentrated, their joint aim was the encirclement and elimination of the remaining rebels in the eastern and central Rif.

General Naulin had been replaced in January by Gen Boichut, whose assets were divided between a western Fes Group and an eastern Taza Group, both with artillery, air and, where appropriate, tank support. They comprised the following infantry divisions (from west to east):

Fes Group (Gen Dufieux):
128th Div (Gen Monhoven; 9x inf bns); *4th Marching Div, ex 35th Div* (Gen Goubeau; 13x inf bns); 2*nd Marching Div* (Gen Théveney; 12x inf battalions).
Taza Group (Gen Marty):
1st Marching Div (Gen Vernois; 12x inf bns); *Moroccan Div* (Gen Ibos; 12x inf bns); *3rd Marching Div* (Gen Dosse; 12x inf battalions).

Taza Group would head from their Es Sebt line NW across the Djebel Rekbaba to link up in the upper Kert valley with a Spanish eastern force from Midar (see below); then north from the Djebel Nador to the Nekor river; NW via the Djebel Iskritten and Djebel Timersgat, and finally to the Djebel Hammam and the river Rhis (see Map 2). Meanwhile, Dufieux's Fes Group would push NE from around Ouezzane to link up with Marty's left flank.

Two Spanish commands would advance from the north: three columns southwards from the Alhucemas lodgement (Gen Castro Girona, *c.*28,000 men), and another SW from Afrau (Col Pozas Perea, 3,000–4,500 men). Meanwhile, an eastern command (Gen González Carrasco, 8,000-plus men) would push west from Midar and up the Kert river to link up with Castro and the French on the Nekor. The



These two mercenaries, supposedly 'German artillerymen', were captured by Spanish troops when Axdir finally fell to the Alhucemas landing force on 2 October 1925. Josef Klemms – a self-publicizing Foreign Legion deserter who carried out mapping work for the Abd el Krims – also claimed to have instructed and commanded Rifian artillery, but he is known to have been an incorrigible liar. (Bettmann/ Contributor via Getty Images)

Five Portuguese legionaries of the *Tercio* pose for the camera. From a few dozen initially, during 1923–26 the number of Portuguese serving at any one time remained steady at about 300, making them the most numerous foreign nationals in Col Franco's corps. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

bulk of these forces were as follows (it is noteworthy that almost the only manoeuvre units of Peninsular infantry were Cazadores):
Northern front (Gen Castro Girona):
Axdir perimeter garrison (Col Vásquez): Cazadores Bn No 2; 16x cos Line Inf; 4x MG cos, 7x batteries.
Col Fixer's column: 2x Tercio Banderas; tabor from Larache Regulares Grupo No 4; Cazadores Bns Nos 7, 8 & 9; 4x batteries.
Col Balmes's column: 2x Tercio Banderas; tabor from Larache Regulares; 2x tabors Tetuán harka; 2x batteries.

H PERSONALITIES

(1) *Comandante* Francisco Franco Bahamonde, *Tercio de Extranjeros*; Tizi Azza, October 1922
Graduating from the Infantry Academy in 1910 aged only 17, in Morocco Franco soon distinguished himself by fearless and professional leadership in Grupo de Regulares No 1 de Melilla/ de Tetuán. As a captain in 1916 he was dangerously wounded, but returned to Morocco as a major in 1920, and was chosen as 2ic of the new Tercio. From command of the 1st Bandera, he succeeded to that of a field brigade, and finally of the whole *'Legión'* as a lieutenant-colonel in June 1923. He was promoted colonel after the 1924 Xaouen retreat, and in 1926 became Europe's youngest general officer, aged 33. Here he wears his usual unshowy campaign dress, without decorations: an officer's gold-and-red-piped *isabelino* cap with a field officer's all-gold tassel, and an 8-point rank star; the Tercio's folded-out light green shirt collar; a 4-pocket tunic, bearing the Tercio's gilt badge on gold-piped shoulder straps, and a cuff star; and *granaderos*. His Mills webbing is compatible with the 'Canadian 1919' set. (After photo in Gabiola, *The Rif War,* Vol 2.)

(2) *Commandant*/ *Chef de bataillon* Zinovi Pechkoff; *3e Régiment Étranger d'Infanterie*, 1926
Born Yeshua Sverdlov in Nizhni-Novgorod in 1884, he took a new name when adopted as a teenager by the writer 'Maxim Gorki' (A.M. Pechkoff). By the time he joined the Legion in Italy in August 1914 he was already a world traveller and accomplished linguist. Corporal Pechkoff was badly wounded during the assault on Vimy Ridge on 9 May 1915 (Médaille Militaire). He adapted resiliently to the loss of his right arm, and in 1916 his background and skills attracted the interest of the Foreign Ministry. As a commissioned interpreter, he took part in military/ diplomatic missions to the USA and Russia in 1917–19. Promoted to captain in the Legion, Pechkoff joined Lyautey's staff in May 1920, and saw fierce fighting as a company commander in the Middle Atlas and Rif campaigns, 1923 and 1925. The English légionnaire Adolph Cooper served with him in the Rif, and greatly admired his brave and humane leadership. Wounded again on the Oued Leben front on 26 June 1925, he served on, both as a *chef de bataillon* and in staff appointments. His later distinguished military/ diplomatic career under Gen de Gaulle lasted from 1940 to 1964, but in 1966 Gen Pechkoff's gravestone at St Geneviéve-de-Bois, Paris, bore only his chosen inscription: 'Zinovi Pechkoff – Légionnaire'.

A 1926 photo shows Pechkoff in the undress *tenue de ville* version of officers' June 1922 *grande tenue*, minus epaulettes or sword. The 'dark blue' M1919 *képi* was actually black, with a *garance*-red top. It bears this rank's four gold *soutaches*; three quarter-pipings over the rim; a gold lace false chinstrap, and a gold-embroidered Legion 7-flamed *grenade*. Full dress for *Troupes Coloniales* and *d'Afrique* was this long stand-collar khaki tunic, here with Legion collar patches. Major's rank (either '*commandant*', or '*chef de bataillon*' if holding a battalion command) was identified by four 8mm gold lace sleeve rings, the top ring slightly separated. Pechkoff wears the double Légion d'Honneur/ Croix de Guerre lanyard awarded to the Foreign Legion Marching Regt (RMLE) for its nine citations on the Western Front, and inherited by the 3rd REI. By 1926 his medal ribbons were probably those of the Légion d'Honneur, Médaille Militaire, Croix de Guerre & C de G TOE, Russian St George Medal, 1918 Allied Victory Medal, 1917 Wound Medal with two stars, Colonial Medal with 'Maroc' clasp, and two Moroccan decorations. Note the 50mm 'dark khaki' trouser sidestripe, and the dark brown silk *ceinturon à béliere* with gilt snake-and-Medusa clasps. (After photo, and Dagnicourt & Jouineau in *Militaria* Nos 151, 153 & 155.)

(3) *Lieutenant* Henri de Bournazel ('*L'Homme Rouge*'); *22e Régiment de Spahis Marocains*, detached to *16e Goum*, 1925–26
Born in 1898, De Bournazel enlisted in the 4th Hussars as soon as he turned 18. He was posted to the front in June 1917; commissioned in March 1918; and earned a Croix de Guerre on 10 November 1918. In June 1923 he was detached from the 22nd Moroccan Spahis to the 16th Goum, and at once distinguished himself at El Mers in the Middle Atlas. He charged on horseback under fire, at first alone, wearing his red regimental tunic and with his face soon masked with blood from a scalp wound. The tribesmen nicknamed him 'the Red Man' in admiration for his *baraka* (the favour of Allah, earned by courage). He would exploit this notoriety thereafter by repeatedly wearing a red tunic in the field (but was not wearing one on 28 February 1933, when he was mortally wounded in the Djebel Sahro).

Although he had a very active combat career, among located photos only one poor-quality snapshot shows De Bournazel in the field during the Rif War, so our reconstruction is slightly tentative. His pale blue and *garance* regimental *képi* bears a gold '22' and 5-point star. His pre-1931 Moroccan Spahi officers' *garance* tunic prematurely features a long 'Aiglon' collar (only authorized from 1929), and lacks collar patches. Three-button scalloped cuff flaps interrupt two gold rank rings. In other photos De Bournazel wears regimental breeches and often puttees, but in the snapshot some kind of leather leggings. His field equipment seems to be a 'Sam Browne' with holstered revolver, a black slung mapcase, binoculars and a water bottle. (After various photos.)

1
2
3

Nine French Foreign Legion battalions from the 1st, 2nd, 3rd & 4th REIs played full parts in Pétain's September 1925 and May 1926 offensives. This shows a 2-gun Hotchkiss section from a battalion's 8-gun MG company; sections were routinely dispersed to support individual rifle companies. The commander – apparently an *adjudant* rather than the regulation *sergent* – wears the tunic of the 'mustard khaki' wool *tenue de drap* with pale linen *tenue de toile* trousers. One légionnaire wears the khaki M1915 *bonnet de police,* and the others *képi*-covers bleached to various degrees. At this date bleaching was against regulations but was tolerated by some battalion commanders, since this link with the old pre-1914 *'Légion du papa'* boosted morale. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

Col Mola's column: 2x Tertio Banderas; 3x tabors + 2x sqns from Melilla Regulares Grupo No 2; Cazadores Bns Nos 13, 14 & 15; harka; 1x battery.
Reserve – Gen Dolla: 1x Tercio Bandera; Cazadores Bn No 4 & part No 7; 2x tabors Tetuán mehala; 6x batteries.
Cavalry – Col Monasterio, later Col Ponte: 1x tabor Regulares; 3x tabors of mehala; 2x MG companies.
Col Pozas' column: Cazadores Bn No 18; miscellaneous mehalas & harkas; 1x battery.
Eastern front (Gen González Carrasco):
1x Tercio Bandera; 3x inf & 1x cav tabors of Alhucemas Regulares Grupo No 5; 2x bns Line Inf Regt No 68 Africa; Cazadores Bn No 16; 4x sqns reconstituted Caz de Cab Regt No 14 Alcántara; mtd cos from Tafersit mehala; *c.*1,000 irregulars; 6x batteries.

* * *

By May, Abd el Krim's potential remaining strength in the eastern theatre may have numbered up to 24,000 warriors: *c.*14,000 facing the Alhucemas front, 4,000 south of Tizzi Azza facing Gen González to their east, and about 6,000 (mostly Gzinnaya and Beni Ammart, stiffened by Ait Waryaghar regulars) facing the French to their SE. Many others had distanced themselves from Abd el Krim, submitted, or openly changed sides, often attracting merciless reprisals. However, his hard core remained defiant.

Operations

On the French far right, on the wet, foggy night of 6/7 May, 3rd Marching Div seized its objectives in the Djebel Rekbaba, and battalions from 1st REI, 62nd RTM and 22nd RTA repulsed fierce counter-attacks on the 8th. That day French tanks linked up with Spanish troops from the east at Souk el Tleta. On 11 May, 3rd Marching Div reached the Nekor river, and the Moroccan Div on their left entered the Djebel Iskritten. Against further counter-attacks, légionnaires of 4th REI held out in the crags for three days and nights without support. Significantly, on 14 May the first elements of the Ait Waryaghar themselves came in to seek terms. Meanwhile,

In May 1926, Abd el Krim faced the final Spanish and French assaults on the eastern and central Rif with perhaps 24,000 hard-core fighters, but after a week's fighting even his own Ait Waryaghar/ Beni Urriaguel tribesmen began to surrender. This group resting in an alley have all received the prized French 8mm M1886/ 93 Lebel rifle. (Courtesy of Cody Images)

on the French left, Fes Group's 128th and 4th Marching Divs pushed NE on 10–11 May, and on 12 May its right-flank 2nd Marching Div linked up with the 1st Marching Div forming Taza Group's left flank, to create a quasi-continuous French front.

In the Spanish sectors, during 8–10 May troops from Alhucemas paid 1,188 casualties for the capture of the strategic Morabos hills, but eventually forced the Ait Waryaghar southwards. The four columns from Axdir and Afrau met and kept up their momentum, eventually pushing the Rifians right back up the Rhis river and into the Djebel Hammam. On the 17th, Gen DolIa took Abd el Krim's fall-back base at Targuist; a final counter-attack by some 200 warriors was driven off, and thereafter mass surrenders among the Temsaman, Beni Tuzin and Ait Waryaghar began. From the east, Gen González's command advanced more slowly up both banks of the Kert, but on 20 May linked up with Castro's troops from the north.

The end

Abd el Krim and his last followers were now encircled in the village of Snada, while several tribes were offering to sell him to the Spanish or French. He would clearly be safer in the hands of the latter: for the sake of wider Franco–Muslim relations, Paris was determined that he be treated leniently, while many Spanish still craved vengeance for past massacres. His offer to surrender on terms reached Col Corap of the Moroccan Div's 8th Bde, and was rapidly passed up the chain of command, while *goumiers* took up protective positions near Snada. On 25 May, Gen Ibos's summary of the French terms was delivered to Snada. On the 27th, both Abd el Krim brothers, their families and immediate entourage rode into Gen Ibos's camp with 270 mule-loads of their wealth and possessions; and on 30 May, Abd el Krim made his formal submission to Gen Boichut at Taza.

The Spanish government made furious demands for his extradition, but in vain. On 16 September his party were shipped from Casablanca to begin 20 years of comfortably subsidized exile on Réunion island in the Indian

Ocean.[4] Meanwhile, France took the opportunity to annex some former Spanish territories.

Local Spanish mopping-up continued until 10 June, and their eventual count of captured and surrendered weapons was 14,500 rifles, 216 machine guns, 113 artillery pieces and 6 mortars. It would take sizeable Spanish forces until 10 July 1927 to complete pacification of pockets of defiance in the western Rif, the Gomara and Yebala. Ahmed Heriro fought to the last, dying of wounds on 3 November 1926, by which time about 85 per cent of the clans in the Spanish zone had reportedly submitted. Primo de Rivera's orders that Spanish troops should exercise restraint during the re-occupation of 1926–27 seem to have been more-or-less obeyed. (In line with Moroccan custom, many ex-rebels – even Ait Waryaghar – had joined Spanish-allied harkas almost immediately, and subsequently the Spanish administration would employ several of Abd el Krim's leading followers in senior roles.)

Reliable figures for total Spanish casualties are not available; estimates often fail to distinguish between fatalities and all casualties, or to define dates, but seem to concentrate on the period from 1921 onwards. One Spanish official source in the late 1920s apparently claimed only 43,500 casualties of all categories, while an unsourced estimate in the *International Review of the Red Cross* (June 2023) seems to suggest that as many as 63,000 died. It therefore seems plausible to guess at anything up to 50,000 Spanish dead and missing during 1909–27. A convincing calculation of French casualties of all categories during their 13-month war stands at about 16,000, and a study by the veteran Gen Antoine Huré puts the deaths among those at 8,628. Comparable figures for Abd el Krim's forces and the Moroccan population are, of course, unknown.

Dated 1921, so possibly photographed during Silvestre's spring advance, this postcard shows two officers of *Regulares* seated on an artillery piece surrounded by their men. The soldier standing at 2 o'clock from the right-hand officer displays the narrow, upwards-pointing, red elbow-to-shoulder left sleeve chevron of a private 1st class.

When well led the *Regulares* were elite troops, but in the panic following Annual those still at Melilla were wrongly suspected of treachery, and disarmed. Apart from irregulars, most of the Moroccans who changed sides were in fact *Policia Indigena*. (Culture Club via Getty Images)

4 In 1947 the French government agreed to Abd el Krim's request that he and his extended family be transferred to southern France for reasons of health care and education, but while *en route* via the Suez Canal he was more-or-less kidnapped in Egypt by Moroccan nationalists seeking to manipulate his fame. After Morocco achieved independence in 1956, Abd el Krim refused an invitation to return; he died in Cairo on 6 February 1963, aged about 81. His name is greatly honoured in Morocco to this day.

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INDEX

References to illustrations are in **bold**, with captions in brackets

Abd el Krim 19, **19**, 20, 21–22, 24, 25, 27–28, 30, 31, 56
  final offensive and surrender 60–62
  gamble 38–48
  Kudia Tahar 54
  political status 32–33
  zenith (1924–25) 32–38
Abd el Krim, M'hamed 19, **19**, 25, 28, 32, 36, 38, 54
aircraft 31, **32**, **44**, 45, **45**, 52, **54**
Alcazarquivir 16
Alfau, Gen Felipe 15–16
Algeria/Algerians 4, 5, 40, **43** (42), 44,45, 46, 48, 50, 52
Alhucemas landings 31, 50–52, 55–56
American forces 45
Annual (1921) 18–25
Axdir/ Ajdir **33**, 33, 36, 56

badges **11** (10), **12**, **13**, **17** (16), **23** (22), **33**, **53** (52), **59** (58)
Balmes, LtCol Amado 16, 54, 58
belts **5**, **11** (10), **15**, **17** (16), **23** (22), **26**, **35** (34), **41**, **43** (42), **51**
Ben Chel-lal **34**, **35** (34)
Beni Ammart/ Ait Ammarth 19, 33, 36, 60
Beni Bou Yahi 48
Beni Bu Ifrur 14, **34**, **35** (34)
Beni Derkoul 42, 44, 47
Beni Urriaguel/ Ait Waryaghar 19, 44, 47–48, 56, 60, 61, 62
Beni Zeroual 38, 39, 44
Berbers 5–6
  clothing **5**, **14**, **29** (28), **35** (34), **39**, **51**, **61**
Berenguer, Gen Dámaso 10, 18, 22, **24**
Bibane 44, 46, 52
Bilotte, Gen Gaston 46, 48
Bocoya/ Ibuqquyen 19, 28, 36
Boichut, Gen **47**, 50, 56, 61
breeches **11** (10), **17** (16), **23** (22), **35** (34), **59** (58)
Bueno, José Maria **11** (10), **17** (16)
Buerguete, Gen Ricardo 26, 27

Cambay, Gen Albert 45, 48
cars 26
cartridge carriers **11** (10), **23** (22), **26**
Castro Girona, Gen 57, 58, 61
casualties, final 6, 62
Cazaban, Maj **41**, 46–47
Ceuta 4, 5, **7**, 9, 10, 15–16, 18
Chambrun, Gen 45, 46
chilaba robes **14**, **17** (16), **19**, **23** (22), **29** (28), **35** (34), **51**
coats **20**, **23** (22), **25**, **43** (42), **53** (52)
Colombat, Gen Arthaud 45, 46, 47
colonialism 4–5
Cooper, Adolph 58

Dar Drius 25, **25**, **26**
de Bournazel, Lt Henri 48, **59** (58)
de Valenzuela, LtCol Rafael 25
deserters 34, **35** (34), **57**
Deslandes, Maj Marcel 52
djubba **19**, **29** (28), **35** (34)

El Mizzián 14–15

Fernández Pérez, Gen 28, 52
footwear
  Berber **14**, **29** (28), **35** (34), **39**
  French and Spanish **4**, **11** (10), **17** (16), **23** (22), **41**, **53** (52)
Franco, Maj Francisco 13, 25, **25**, 55, **59** (58)
French forces 40, 42–48
  1st REI **41**, 45, 46, 52, 60, **60**
  1st RTSM 42
  3rd Marching Div 50, 57, 60
  air power **44**, 45, **53** (52)
  Armee d'Afrique 40, **43** (42), **53** (52), 58
  armoured units 26
  Bataillon d'infanterie type Marocaine 40
  coordinated with Spanish 49–62
  Foreign Legion **38**, 40, 46, 48, 52, **59** (58), **60**
  goums 40, 48, 56, **59** (58), 61
  Moroccan Div 48, 50, 57, 60, 61
  partisans 40, **41**, 56
  RICM 38, 40, **43** (42), 45
  tirailleurs **38**, 40, 42, **43** (42), 46, **51**, **53** (52)
  Troupes Coloniales 40, **43** (42), **53** (52), 58
  uniforms **43** (42), **53** (52), **54**, **59** (58)
  Zouaves 40, **53** (52), **54**
Freydenberg, Col Henry 45, 46, 49, 50

Gabiola, Javier Garcia de 10, 19
gandoura **14**, **29** (28), **39**
García Aldave, Gen José 14–15
Gil Mejuto, Jaime **12**
Goded, Gen Manuel 34, 55–56
Gomara/ Ghomara 6, **7**, 18, 25, 38, 62
Gómez, Gen Jordana 18
González Carrasco, Gen 56, 57, 60, 61
Gurugu 14, 22, 24
Gzinnaya 19, 36, 47–48, 60

Haddu n'Muh Amyzzan 47–48
haversacks/knapsacks **11** (10), **17** (16), **43** (42), **53** (52)
headwear
  Berber **14**, **19**, **29** (28), **35** (34)
  French troops **38**, **41**, **43** (42), **48**, **49**, **50**, **53** (52), **59** (58), **60**
  Spanish troops **4**, **6**, **8**, **11** (10), **12**, **13**, **15**, **17** (16), **18**, **20**, **23** (22), **25**, **26**, **30**, **33**, **59** (58)
Heriro, Ahmed 30, 32, 46, 54, 62
Huré, Gen Antoine 62

Ibos, Gen Pierre 52, 57, 61

jackets **4**, **6**, **8**, **9**, **11** (10), **20**, **43** (42), **48**, **53** (52), **59** (58)

Kert, river 14–15
Kifane 44, 47–48
Kudia Tahar 54

Larache 9, 15, 16, 32
Larrea, Gen 18
leggings **11** (10), **17** (16), **35** (34), **53** (52)
Lyautey, Gen Hubert 5, 38–39, 44–45, 46, **46**, 47, 48, 50

Marina, Gen José 13, 14, 16
Marty, Gen 50, 57
medals **13**, **59** (58)
Melilla 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 18, 22, 24
mercenaries 31, 36, 38, 45, **57**
Millán Astray, LtCol José 12–13
Mills webbing **23** (22), **26**, **59** (58)
Muñoz Grandes, Col 55

Nador **21**, 24
Naulin, Gen Stanislas **47**, 48, 50, 56
Navarro, Gen Felipe 22, 24

Painlevé, Paul **41**, 46
Pardo, Gen 28
Pechkoff, Gen Zinovi **59** (58)
Pétain, Marshal Philippe **46**, 48–50, 56
poison gas 6, 31
Primo de Rivera, Gen Miguel 28, 30, **30**, 32, 49, 54, 55, 62
prisoners of war 24, **24**
puttees **41**, 53 (52)

Raisuli, Mulay Ahmad el 13, 15, 18, 25, 30, 32
Rif War background and origins 4–6
Rifian forces 34–36
Riquelme, Gen José 32, 49, **50**
Rue, Larry **33**

Sanjurjo, Gen José 22, 25, 28, 50–51, 54, 55, 56
Saro y Marin, Gen 51, 55
sashes **17** (16), **43** (42), **51**
satchels (*skala*) **17** (16), **29** (28), **35** (34), **39**, **41**
Senegalese 40, 43 (42), 45, 50, 52
Sevillano Cousillas, Lt 54
shirts **17** (16), **23** (22), **33**, **59** (58)
Sidi Driss 20
Silvela, Luis 27
Silvestre, Gen Manuel Fernándes **11** (10), 18–22, **20**
Snada 61
Souk el Tleta 56, 60
Spanish forces 6–18
  1st–7th Banderas (Tercios) 22, 25, 31, 51, 54
  air power 31
  armoured units 26, **27**
  Cazadores 6, 9, **10** (11), 13, 14, 15, 21, **23** (22), 25, 31–32, 52, 54, 55, 58, 60
  Ceuta Bde 51–52, 55
  coordinated with French 49–62
  early operations 13–25
  Melilla Bde 52, 55–56
  Peninsular forces 6–10, 12, 24, 25, 28, 31, 32, 58
  Policia Indigena **9**, 10, **17** (16), 20
  Regulares 9–12, 14, 15, **17** (16), 18–19, 21–25, 28, 30–32, **33**, **35** (34), 51–52, 54–55, 58, 60, **62**
  Tercio 9, 12–13, **18**, **23** (22), 25, **26**, 28, 30–32, 51–52, 54–55, **57**, 58, **59** (58), 60
  uniforms **11** (10), **17** (16), **23** (22), **59** (58)
Sultanate army 12, **24**, 25, 32, 38, 52, 55, 60
Sweeney, Col Charles **45**

Tafrant 42, 46, 47
Taghzat 36
tanks 26, **27**, 49
Taounate **40**, 47
Taza **7**, 44, 48
Temprano, LtCol Claudio **33**
Temsaman 19, 20, 36, 61
tenue de toile **41**, **43** (42), **48**, **53** (52)
Tetuán 9, 15–16, 18, 30, 32, 38, 54
Tifarauín 28
Tizzi Azza 25, 27, **30**
trousers **4**, **6**, **8**, **9**, **11** (10), **17** (16), **23** (22), **29** (28), **43** (42), **53** (52), **59** (58), **60**
trucks 26
tunics **6**, **8**, **11** (10), **17** (16), **18**, **23** (22), **43** (42), **47**, **59** (58), **60**

Varela, Col 52, 56
Vera, Col 55–56
Villalba Rubio, Maj José **13**

water bottles **11** (10), **17** (16), **23** (22), **26**, **43** (42)
weapons 9, 36, 38, **39**, 44
  7.65mm Ruby semi-automatic pistol **43** (42)
  9mm semi-automatic pistol **17** (16)
  155mm howitzers **40**
  bayonets **11** (10), **23** (22), **53** (52)
  captured/lost 20, **21**, **24**, 36, 47, 62
  daggers **17** (16), **35** (34)
  F1 grenades **53** (52)
  Hotchkiss machine gun 9, **26**, **35** (34), 44, **60**
  M1866 Chassepots 28
  M1871 Remington 'rolling block' **29** (28), **41**
  M1873 Albinis 28
  M1874 Gras rifle **14**, **29** (28)
  M1874 Martini-Peabodys 28
  M1886/93 Lebel rifle **29** (28), **43** (42), **61**
  M1892 revolver **53** (52)
  M1893 rifle **4**, **11** (10), **17** (16), **51**
  M1895 sabre **11** (10)
  M1897 field gun **29** (28), **40**, **49**
  M1907/15 five-shot Berthier rifle **43** (42)
  M1912 Cam Giro pistol **35** (34)
  M1915 'Chauchat' LMG 40, **43** (42), 44
  M1916 Berthier carbine **35** (34), **51**
  M1916 Spanish Mauser **23** (22)

Yebala/ Djibala 6, **7**, 13, 15, 18, 25, 44, 46, 49, 62

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Editor's note

Spellings: The transcription of Arabic names and terms (which lack vowels) into any European language can only be approximate, and since versions found in separate Spanish, French and English sources inevitably differ we cannot claim consistency in this text.
We have generally stuck to Spanish spellings in the passages describing Spanish operations, and French versions in passages on the French 1925–26 campaigns. At first mention, usually in the early Spanish chapters, we give both versions in the sequence Spanish/ French – e.g. the 'Yebala/ Djibala' region, the 'Gueznaya/ Gzinnaya' tribe, the placenames 'Axdir/ Ajdir' and 'Zoco el Telata/ Souk el Tleta', etc.
Most names on the **maps** on pages 7 and 37 are in French spelling; common geographical terms are *Oued* (river valley, abbreviated 'O.'), and *Djebel* (mountain range or massif, abbreviated 'Dj.').
In prefixes to tribal names, the traditional distinction between 'Ait' (Berber/ Imazhigen) and 'Beni' (Arabic) is unreliable as a guide to ethnicity – both because of inconsistent sources, and because several Berber tribes had become 'Arabised', and *vice versa*.

Errata: On Plates B1, C1, D2, D3, E1, E2 and E3, the interior of the *chilabas*, visible where the hoods are thrown back, should match the exterior colours and striping. This error is the responsibility of Martin Windrow, not of the illustrator Mark Stacey.

Abbreviations in the text:

2ic	second in command
Arty	artillery
Capt	Captain
Caz de Cab	Spanish Light Horse
Col	Colonel
Eng	Engineer
Gen	General
GOC	General Officer Commanding
LMG	light machine gun
Lt	Lieutenant
LtCol	Lieutenant-Colonel
Maj	Major
MG	machine gun
NE, NW	north-east, north-west
SE, SW	south-east, south-west
S/ Lt	French *sous-lieutenant*, 2nd Lt